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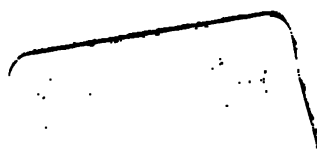
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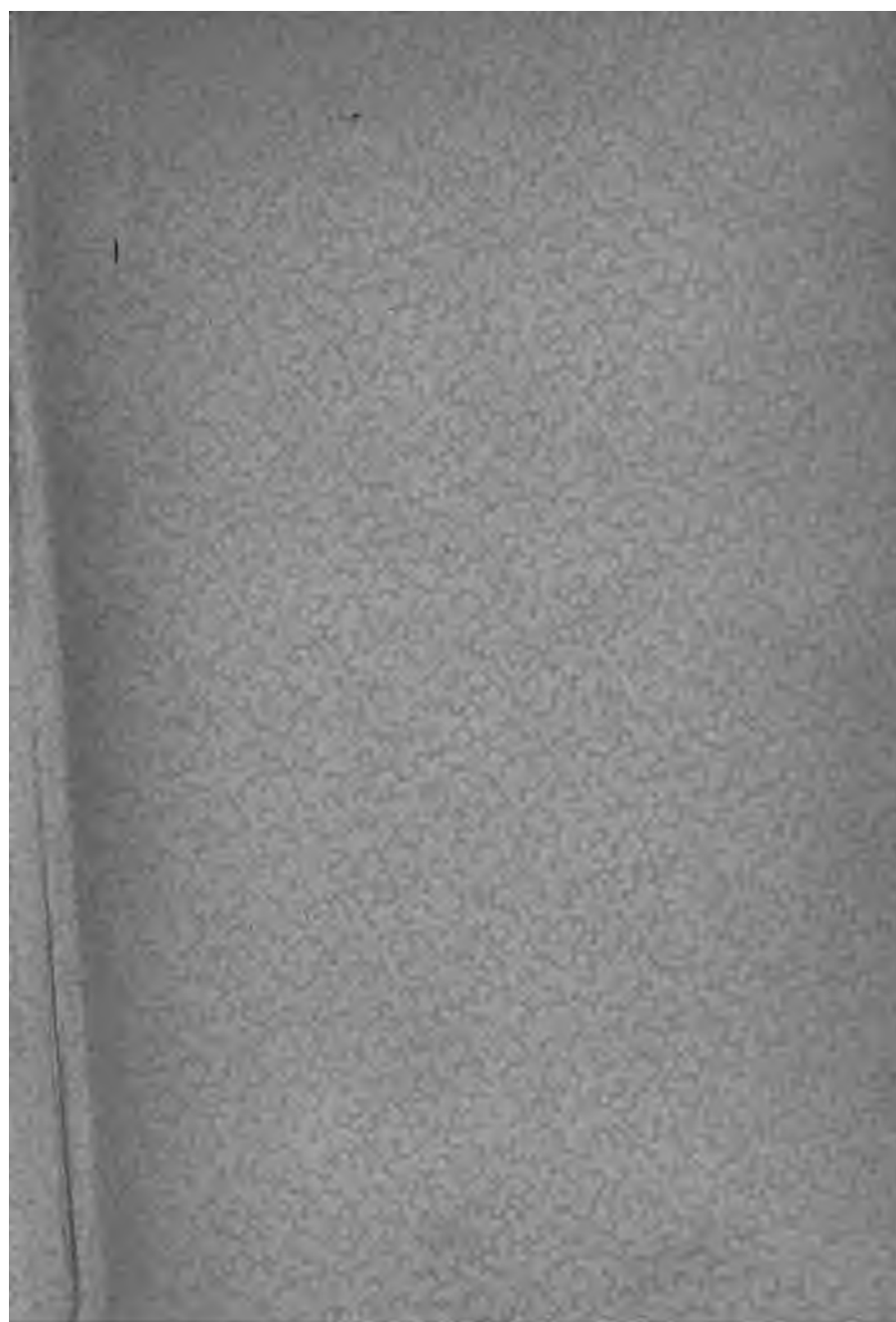
*IN PERSIA*



BY E. STACK

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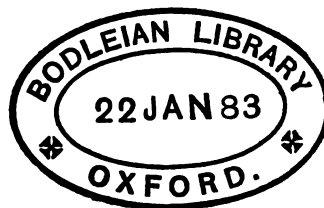
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# SIX MONTHS IN PERSIA.

BY  
EDWARD STACK,  
BENGAL CIVIL SERVICE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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# SIX MONTHS IN PERSIA.

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## CHAPTER I.

### YAZD TO ISFAHAN.

FIFTY-SEVEN FARSAKHS;<sup>1</sup> NINE DAYS.

12th to 14th May, *Halt at Yazd*.—The first stage of our march to Isfahan was a short one. It is always difficult to get a caravan away in good time from quarters where they have been comfortably settled for a few days. We had the honour of a cavalry escort, who performed some respectable feats of equitation, such as firing at a mark while in full gallop, dismounting and remounting at the same pace, firing under the horse's neck while lying hidden along his side, and so on. One rider galloped along with

<sup>1</sup> The distance is recorded as 191 miles only in *Eastern Persia*, apparently from exact measurements. Our route was about ten miles longer. The average farsakh would thus be something over three miles and a half in this part of Persia.

his head on the saddle and his heels in the air, his wide Persian trousers flapping indecently like a reversed petticoat. Being clear of the city, I dismissed our guard, with thanks to them and the Khan, and we set our faces towards Isfahan, rejoicing that we were within nine days' march of that temporary terminus of our travels.

14th May, *Askizar*, 3 *farsakhs*.—The road from Yazd to Isfahan is so well known that a particular description of it were superfluous. It may be remembered that a chain of mountains—the Dawirân—extends between Karman and Yazd, flanked on either side by a parallel chain, all three ranges running from south-east to north-west, and sinking lower as they proceed. By the time one reaches Yazd, only two ranges are left—Dawirân, with which the Kuhbanan mountains have coalesced, and the range which has Pariz mountains at one end, and Shirkuh at the other. Beyond Shirkuh the range sinks again; it is called on the map Kuh Marwah, and the distance between it and the parallel range of Siyah Kuh is some forty miles. Both ranges, but especially Siyah Kuh, are mere black sierras, high enough to deserve the name of mountains, but not high enough to feed perennial streams or support villages.

The road from Yazd to Isfahan, as far as Nain, lies in the plain, with Siyah Kuh on the right hand and Marwah on the left. At Nain it turns to the left, crosses Marwah at a point where that range has begun to rise again, and comes down upon Isfahan.

Half-way between Yazd and Askizar, a cool and shady garden invited us to halt. We found the owner, a Yazd merchant, sitting under the porch of his garden house, beside a tank and stream of clear water. Pipes and mulberries, bread and buttermilk, were brought for us, while our host talked of the opium trade, and lamented his hard fate in being tied to his office in Yazd six days of the week. To-day was a Friday, and he had come to his garden to lounge through the holiday in the genuine oriental fashion. We envied his ease and restfulness as we remounted under the blazing sun. I found good quarters ready for me in Askizar, a bed in a wide-arched recess, under the draught of a windtower, and in the evening a cup of tea, a qalyan, and a chat with the kadhuda.

*14th—15th May, Ardakan, 7 farsakhs; 11 p.m. to 8 a.m.*—This was the last of our day marches in the plain of Yazd. That night we



started at eleven, and wandered for six miles in a sea of sand hills, losing our way twice. This is the sand which by prophecy shall one day overwhelm Yazd. It has overwhelmed old Askizar. The mosque which marked the centre of the old village stands now half buried in the midst of a waste of hillocks that overlie the roofs of houses. The village has shifted farther eastward. In a high wind, such as often blows at this season, all landmarks are lost, and travellers must camp where they stand till the air clears again. Whole hillocks of sand will be transported from one place to another when the wind blows hard. We had enjoyed a taste of these siroccos in Askizar, where the courtyard, during the afternoon, was filled with clouds of sand; and we were glad to leave the sand hills behind us, and enter on a firmer region of clay. I had been unable to sleep in Askizar, and now that the excitement of hunting for the road was over, sleepiness began to assail me. Those who have watched all night know what it is to combat sleep, how persistently the enemy returns to the charge, and how treacherously our senses counsel a surrender. Persians can sleep on horseback or muleback; the European traveller has to

keep awake or tumble off.<sup>2</sup> So one jogs along in a dazed and drowsy state, dreaming brief dreams, and weary of perpetually lifting the perpetually drooping eyelids. From time to time one wakes with a start, and beholding the white moonlight-flooded plain and the dimly seen shapes of distant mountains, one feels for the moment as if travelling in a land of spells, as if riding up to the boundless wall of some enchanted castle, but on looking again, it is only the shadow of the horse and his rider, or the moonlight over the space of white clay. I thought of those lines in *Gebir*,

And the pale moonbeam on the hard wet sand  
Lay like a jasper column half upreared.

Morning dawned slowly over an expanse of clay cut up by nullahs. A sudden drop of fifty feet showed us the villages of Maibut lying below us, girt by green, well-watered fields; a view more Indian than anything I had seen

<sup>2</sup> Colonel Smith told me of two English officers who were riding post from Isfahan to Teheran. They pushed on from stage to stage without waiting for sleep. Near the end of their journey one of them became dimly aware that all was not as it should be, and recognized the fact that he was alone. His companion was lying by the road-side, having fallen from his horse. He was wakened, remounted, and they rode in together.

since leaving Bushire. Maibut itself lay embowered in trees on our left. In two hours more we were drawing near to Ardakan, and the town began to separate itself from its green suburbs, and to stand out as a small fenced city, enclosed within a wall with gates and towers, mud-built. We were met by the governor outside the gates, and conducted through a good bazar to comfortable quarters in his house. In the evening, I went on the roof, and looked at the plain and the Siyah Kuh mountains, and the narrow strip of kavir under them; after which I bought a horse. In Yazd I had sold one horse and bought two, one of which I now gave in part payment for this Ardakan animal. I was now the master of three horses and a pony.

Ardakan has a population of about 10,000. There is a saying that Yazd is a large village, and Ardakan a small city.

Sayyid Ali had a festive supper with the shatirbashi and the governor, and was in high spirits while the mules were loading. "Where's Laili?" said one of the muleteers, expecting that animal, which was indeed the best mule of the five, to come up and be packed. "Here's Laili," I said, "but I don't see Majnun." "Banda majnun i hama am," replied Sayyid Ali,

and provoked a general laugh. Laili was a lady beloved by Majnun, whose name means *mad*, or, more literally, *possessed with a devil*; and Sayyid Ali's observation might mean either "I will serve for Majnun," or "I am the mad-man of the party." After which explanation, the reader will probably be of opinion that a small joke suffices to make travellers in Persia laugh.

15th to 16th May, Agda, 8 farsakhs; 10 p.m. to 7 a.m.—We marched sixteen miles over the hard clay intermixed with small fragments of stone. No night was ever more lovely, more cool and still. I dismounted and walked on alone, with the plain around me and the midnight sky overhead. After an hour's walking, I passed two parties of travellers on foot, and exchanged greeting with them. Then the roof of the half-way caravansarai began to appear. Some woodcutters and their donkeys were sleeping under the walls. I sat on a bundle of faggots and waited for the caravan. Presently the sleeping men awoke, and began to load up. They told me they were carrying loads of fuel to Ardakan, camelthorn cut in the hills above Agda. When the caravan came up, we began to ascend the long foot-slope of these hills, which belong to the Marwah range. The sun rose on us three miles from Agda. It is a

large village, with a high mud fort, partly in ruins, where we were assigned quarters. Agda is remarkable for its noble caravansarai and abambar, built by a merchant of Rasht thirty years ago, and for a large spring in a hollow under the fort. The spring is fed from the mountains, and in a cleft of them, twelve miles distant, a patch of green denotes the village of Hasanabad, watered by a perennial brook. The Zabit of Agda was an old man, and indisposed to receive strangers; nevertheless he did violence to his disposition, and treated us with great civility.

16th—17th May, Naugumbaz, 9 farsakhs; 9 p.m. to 7 a.m.—It was about nine at night when we set out on our nine-farsakh march to Naugumbaz. This is sheer desert, and used to be dangerous. A glance at the map will show a great break in the Siyah Kuh hills opposite Agda. Through this break, under the mountain called Siyah Kuh *par excellence*, Biluchi marauders used to swoop down upon the exposed portion of the Yazd-Isfahan road between Agda and Nain. Naugumbaz fort and caravansarai are midway, and caravans arriving safely there were accustomed to look towards Siyah Kuh for guidance as to their further movements. A small guard was stationed on the mountain, who kindled a fire

by night or a smoke by day, if any Biluchi band had passed through the gap. That was a warning to detain caravans till want of provisions should compel the Biluchis to return. But the road is quite safe now, and I walked along without any uneasiness. Three abambars, the midmost of which has also a fine caravan-sarai and a fort, serve to mark the stages of the road. We were all more or less sleepy. The shatirbashi and ghulam rode ahead to gain a quarter of an hour's sleep at each abambar till the caravan came up. At fourteen miles we came upon puffy clay soil, with a salt spring oozing out, like an abortive kavîr; anything was welcome as a change in the blank leagues of the stony plain. The dawn broke very slowly behind the black saw-ridge of Siyah Kuh. Like the *Passionate Pilgrim*, I might say, "Lord, how mine eyes throw gazes to the east!" I watched the light widen slowly westwards in the pale cloudless sky, saw the sun's orb at last fill with fire the bottom of a notch in the jagged skyline of the mountains, and caught sight of Naugumbaz caravansarai from the top of one of the undulations into which the plain here breaks. A few fields surround the fort, which is garrisoned by tufangchis. To the east and north the desert stretches limitless; under

Siyah Kuh lies a kavîr, said to be impassable save by a few tracks, and beyond that, through breaks in the mountains, one can enter the great central basin of Persia, which sinks down to the dry sea of salt called the Great Kavîr. My Yazd ghulam told me the story of his experiences in crossing this desert some years ago. He was in the service of a wealthy landowner of Yazd, from whom the then Governor (such was the story) wished to extort 30,000 tomans, on some pretext or other. The man determined to carry his case to Teheran, but fearing to be turned back if he travelled by the main road, he made across the desert to Damghan. With his two sons and a few trusty servants, he rode to Bâfk, thence northward across the wastes of Chahkâvar to the Yazd and Khorasan road at Sâghand, and on to Biyaza and Jandak. At Jandak they purchased camels and procured a guide, who led them one farsakh to an abambar, where they watered their cattle, filled their skins, and entered the kavîr. The guide slipped away at the earliest opportunity, and went home. Their march had begun in the afternoon; next morning the sun rose out of the kavîr, they marched all day and saw the sun set in the kavîr, and it was not till noon of the third day that they arrived in Husainân.

The breadth of the kavîr thus crossed is said to be one-and-twenty farsakhs; it is described as genuine kavîr, puffy, full of holes, and dangerous to be trodden, save in the beaten track. On the Husainân side, it is terminated by a chain of low but very steep hills, which the party crossed by zigzag paths in single file. The pass is said to have been discovered by a camel-herd who followed the track of a badger among the rocks. In this journey across the kavîr, my informant said the whole party nearly perished of thirst, and his horse dropped dead under him. One of his master's sons died in Damghan from the effects of fright and suffering. Two other stories of the kavîr may also be related. A caravan was crossing this desert in winter; it came on to snow, they lost their way, and lay down till the weather should clear; and there they were all frozen to death. More recently, the servant of a Yazd landowner, bringing his master rents from Jandak laden on a mule, was awakened in a sleepy night-march by the mule pulling the leading-rein out of his hand. Something had frightened the animal, it left the beaten track, the man was afraid to venture after it in the night, and neither mule nor money was ever seen again.



My quarters in Naugumbaz were in the upper room of the chaparkhana. The ghulam sent a man to fetch me fresh milk from a distance of seven miles.

18th May, Nain, 6 farsakhs ; 2.30 a.m. to 8 a.m.—We did not march till 2.30 a.m. next day, for Nain lies comparatively high and cool, between the Bilabad mountains on the west and a short irregular range, of no great height, on the east. As we cleared the skirts of the deserts, a few towers and forts on the higher ground marked the outposts of cultivation. Then we came upon Bafran, situated at the foot of a ridge of clay, of the same colour as the town itself. Riding through Bafran and up the ridge, we saw Nain five miles distant, with two blue domes and a minaret—rather a pretty picture. The Khan of the place met us and assigned me excellent quarters in a painted and gilded room, where a good breakfast also was ready. In the afternoon I drank tea with the Khan and the Mustaufi or chief revenue authority of the place, and then went out to see the old fort. This is in the middle of Nain, on a mound of clay. Its centre portion or citadel stands some sixty feet above the level of the town, and is inaccessible at present. The main fort has many old towers, small vaulted cham-

bers under the citadel, and dry wells. A wall with towers surrounded the whole. The fort is a mere ruin now. The principal mosque of Nain has also the reputation of great antiquity, and this is borne out to some extent by its style. I was conducted inside it; three sides of the square have cloisters consisting of a double row of arches, behind which are vaulted rooms. The fourth side has a single row only. The material is brick, and the style (so to speak) heavy, square, and solid. The minaret is eighty feet high, built of unbaked bricks, with a wooden gallery round the top. Nain lies below, compact within the irregular outline of its wall. Eight years ago, the census of Nain showed 8000 inhabitants. The present population was estimated for me at 5000.

19th May, *Tuhdashk*, 8 *farsakhs*; 5.15 a.m. to 3 p.m.—We set out for *Tuhdashk*<sup>3</sup> next morning at a quarter past five. Our marches between Marwah and Siyah Kuh were now done with; we turned westwards, and addressed ourselves to cross Marwah, which here has risen again to a height of 7300 feet. Near

<sup>3</sup> Meaning “the bottom of the plain.” The change of *t* into *k* in these parts is common enough, e.g. *Rudashk* for *Rudasht*, “the face of the plain,” or perhaps *Rud-dasht*, “the river-plain.”

the top of the long foot-slope, facing Nain, stand a few villages, and beyond them is the untenanted caravansarai of Bilabad, near which we breakfasted under mulberry-trees, beside a cool qanat-stream. The ascent to this point from Yazd, though nearly 3000 feet, is so gradual as to be scarcely noticeable. We now entered the Bilabad pass, which winds in gentle gradients to the crest of the range, amid low rounded hills, and then descends slowly to Tuhdashk on the farther side. The kadkhuda took us in, and gave me a good upper room. I had a capital bathe in the tank of his inner courtyard, overhung with trellised vines. It is a strange fact that all the water in the Bilabad pass is slightly brackish, though at an elevation so respectable. Some tiny hamlets on the right of the road support themselves by slender springs, and Tuhdashk has a brook and a qanat, both yielding water with that singular flat taste which denotes absence of sweetness rather than the presence of salt. We were now able to see the lower valley of the Zaindarud, the river of Isfahan. It is a plain blotched with white patches of kavîr. This was on our left front; on our right front was a bold range still retaining some snow on its highest peaks; while straight before us a gap in low hills at fourteen farsakhs

indicated the road to Isfahan. I regarded the Zaindarud valley—it is called Rudashk—with no small interest. It was the same kavîr-threaded plain that I had seen from the back of Shirkuh, but we were now a hundred miles farther to the north-west. Of the desert-road from Yazd to Isfahan, *behind* Marwah, I had seen the south-eastern starting-point from Shirkuh, and now the north-western point of arrival—Varzina—lay below Tuhdashk, on the verge of the Rudashk plain, quite plain to sight at the distance of six farsakhs. The intermediate stages I had not viewed, but their names I knew from guides, and their nature I had to guess by scanning the lower portion of the plain, after the Zaindarud and human habitation have disappeared together. Rudashk is full of villages which border the river; but as the Zaindarud proceeds, its channel deepens, the river becomes useless for irrigation, and finally the whole body of water disappears in the kavîr. They call this place Gaukhana or Cowhouse, doubtless because it is a grazing-place for cattle. In Kuhpa I met a youth who had been herding cattle there last year, and he gave me a description of the place as a great fen, six farsakhs long from edge to edge, and four broad. Its outer portion is tamarisk and

zirishk jungle, the inner belt is tall reeds and grass, and in the centre is a hollow basin of kavîr, two farsakhs across, impassable bog, over which the river disperses its waters (*pakhsh mishavad*) and is swallowed up. Round the margin of the fen, cattle and mules graze through the winter till the *nauruz* or entrance of the sun into the sign of the Lamb; then the mules have to return to avoid the heat, but cattle can graze all through the summer. The herd-boys carry a month's flour with them, and sour curds, desiccated, in skins; and brackish water is to be found in pools. Such was my informant's story. The upper part of Rudashk is studded with villages disposed along the left bank of the river, with a few hamlets qanat-fed from the foot-slope of the Tuhdashk hills. Having now tolerably complete information of the route, I regretted that I had not boldly taken the road to Isfahan *viâ* the desert behind Marwah and the populous plain of Rudashk; but it was some consolation to know that I had escaped the Rudashk mosquitoes, which are reputed to be of the bigness of sparrows. In the evening I went out, attended by the elders and youngsters of the village, to a round hill, where some of them looked through my tele-

scope. Your Persian is generally quite incapable of seeing anything with a telescope, but these people professed themselves delighted with what they fancied they saw. They wanted to know if I could photograph. The art of photography is greatly admired in Persia. The people remembered General Goldsmid's Mission, which halted here on the 30th November, 1870. What fixed the Mission in their memory was the fancy price, three krans, given by the naturalist, Mr. Blanford, for a fox-skin. Coming down the hill, an old man, the learned man of the village, began a literary conversation, which soon branched off into theology. "What account," said he, "do you give of the birth of Saint Jesus, on whom be peace?" I told him all that I remembered. "That's mostly right," he said, "but our account of the conception is that the angel Gabriel breathed into the sleeve of Saint Miriam;" and then he went on to explain that Mohammed having come into the world so many centuries after Christ, must be regarded as our latest authentic guide. To which I replied, as usual, that we of the West considered the Prophet as out of our sphere, and were content with our own revelation. The old fellow was very courteous, though ready

enough for a theological controversy, had I been inclined to consume time so unprofitably.

20th May, *Kuhpa*, 4 *farsakhs*; 7 a.m. to noon.—Next morning we marched to *Kuhpa*. The name means Hill-foot, and the village is situated on the long foot-slope at the back of the north-western continuation of the Marwah range, which broadens and rises greatly as it goes on, till it expands into the mountain region north and north-east of Isfahan, with peaks 11,000 feet high. This foot-slope on the western side of the Marwah range is traversed by the road the whole way from *Tuhdashk* to *Sagzi*; the road descends the slope obliquely, drawing nearer to *Rudashk* and farther away from the mountains at each successive stage. *Kuhpa* has a noble caravansarai, with a *shahnishin* or upper story at one end, and a smaller group of vaulted rooms over the gateway. The whole is massively built of brickwork. I had the *shahnishin* to myself; the rooms were without doors, but at that time of the year no better quarters could be desired. In the afternoon I walked round the village, saw much excellent poppy, which goes to Yazd, though Isfahan is nearer; abundance of mulberry, fig, sinjad, and fruit-trees; and the first *vertical*

waterwheel I had seen in Persia. It was about five feet in diameter. The village seemed to be in a prosperous state; a contrast to the ruins of Maskinân which we had passed on the road. Kuhpa is a Persian telegraph station, on the line from Isfahan to Yazd. While there, I heard that the Mutamid ud Daulat had arrived at a shrine and village a farsakh distant. In Yazd I had learned of the recall of the Mutamid from Shiraz, and the assignment of Fars to the Zill-us-Sultan, in addition to his own province of Isfahan. The Mutamid found a telegram from his successor awaiting him in Kuhpa, ordering or requesting him to call at Isfahan on his way to the capital. But the old man was jealous and vexed, not without reason; he returned a negative answer to his grand-nephew, and took the Ardistan road to Teheran.

21st *May*, *Sagzi*, 6 *farsakhs*; 4 *a.m.* to 10 *a.m.*—Our next march was to *Sagzi*. This is the last village at the end of the long foot-slope of the mountains, where it sinks into the kavîr. The shatirbashi and I trotted on, and as morning dawned we were within eight miles of *Sagzi*. The place is a fort with a small caravansarai; half-a-mile further on is a hamlet, surrounded by mulberry, elm, and sinjad trees, and by fields



of excellent poppy and wheat. Finding no quarters here, we returned to the caravansarai. A small vaulted room was swept out for me, and proved comfortable enough. The mules came up two hours later. Sagzi has three slender qanats of brackish water. An abambar has been begun, which will supply fresh water hereafter; as it was, our drinking-water had to be fetched from the sweet qanat of the hamlet. From the roof of the caravansarai, one gets a good view of the upper part of Rudashk, a district which evidently has known better days. One village has a minaret seventy feet high, another has an old mosque and a minaret 120 feet high, with three balconies outside. These are no works of modern times, but must date as far back as the best period of Isfahan. Beyond the river, under the distant hills, a large village stands out with remarkable distinctness, a treeless collection of grey houses leaning against the red hillside. It is more than twenty miles distant, yet the outline of every house is clear cut as in a picture. Down the middle of the valley runs the white line of the kavir.

*22nd May, Isfahan, 6 farsakhs; 12 p.m. to 9 a.m.*—We sent the mules on about nine p.m., with orders to wait for us at Khurasjan, a farsakh from Isfahan; and at midnight we marched

after them. I rode on alone, descended the last of the long slope, and entered the kavîr. The ground here was utterly flat and devoid of grass, herbage, or stones. Wide tracts of white salt extended on either hand. The air had grown so chilly that I was glad to put on my thickest coat. The moon, rising late, threw a dim light over salt and clay. It was like riding into dreamland. This is the end of the kavîr, which extends (practically speaking) from Sirjan to Isfahan, and which I had first seen on debouching from the mountains above Forg, next from the back of Shirkuh, and again from the heights of Tuhdashk. Here, under Isfahan, it is a small thing, some six miles broad. We crossed it, and ascended the foot-slope of the Gulnabad hill. Day was just breaking as we halted at Gulnabad caravansarai for a smoke and a drink of water. It was broad daylight by the time we had reached the edge of the plateau of Isfahan. That was the richest prospect I had seen in Persia. We could see ten miles before us, and six miles to left and right; but the plateau is much larger than this. The whole space appeared covered with crops, green trees, villages, and pigeon-towers. As we rode on, I ceased to wonder at this fertility, seeing the abundance of water. We rode under

mulberry-trees, between ripening wheat or poppy and broad watercourses. Isfahan city presented no striking feature, save the blue dome of the Shah's mosque ; the rest was hidden in lavish foliage. In Khurasjan we found the mules, had a slight breakfast and a smoke, I changed my clothes, and we entered Isfahan with respectability. We went to the principal caravansarai, and as our little caravan, seeking quarters, halted under the tall plane-trees beside the tank in the centre, I heard my name pronounced, and to my great delight saw M. Collignon come out to meet me. His servants found an upper room for Sayyid Ali, the mules went to the stables, and I accompanied M. Collignon to his office, a large suite of rooms on the lower floor. Here we breakfasted, and after resting till the heat of the day was over, I rode to M. Collignon's house in Julfa. Some newspapers and letters were waiting for me in the hands of the Rev. Mr. Hoernle ; these I duly received, and after a bathe in the tank and a cup of coffee, I reclined luxuriously in an easy chair, with a qalyan and two numbers of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, rejoicing in ease after toil, and scorning to change my state with kings.





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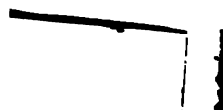
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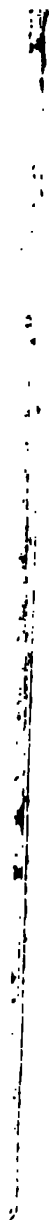
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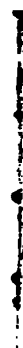
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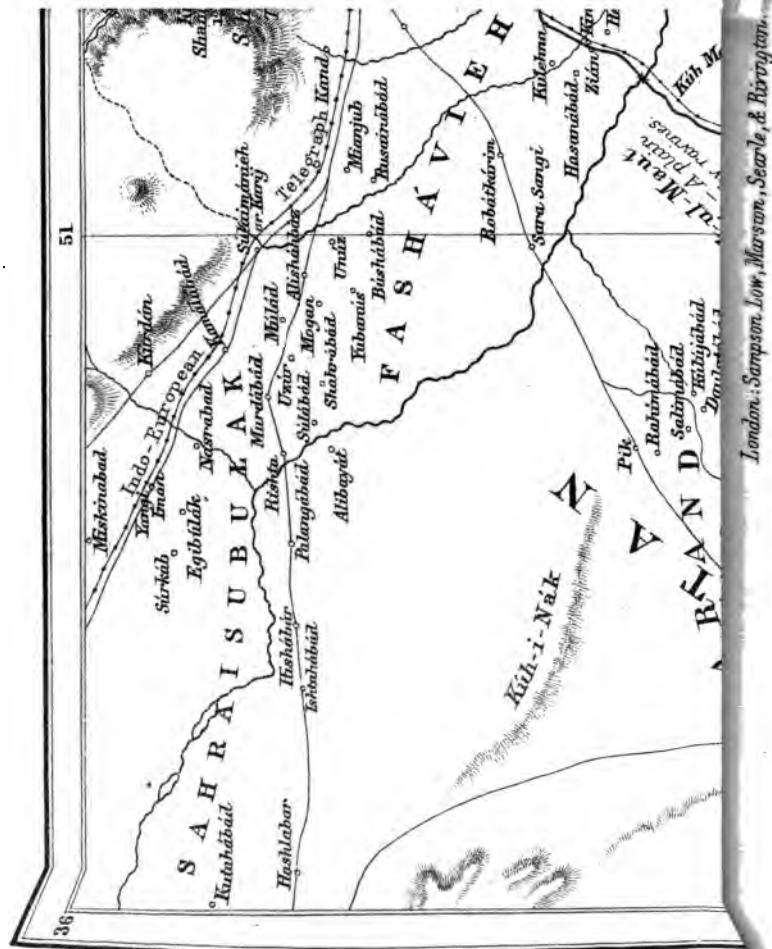
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## CHAPTER II.

## ISFAHAN.

22ND MAY TO 10TH JUNE.

THE ancient capital of Persia has been described over and over again. I have no intention of trying to say anything new on the subject. But some account of modern life in Isfahan, whether among Persians, Armenians, or Europeans, may not be without interest. For my own part, Isfahan is associated in my memory with the names of many hospitable friends, and especially of M. Collignon, who had been one of our party from Bushire to Shiraz, and who now welcomed and entertained me royally during my twenty days' stay in Julfa.

Julfa is usually called the Armenian suburb of Isfahan. It is really a village south of the city, and distant from it nearly three miles. The Zaindarud flows between, and is crossed by three stone bridges, two of which are ex-

cellent. The bridge farthest down stream is at once a bridge and a dam ; the water pours through its arches in a small cascade, and the lake-like expanse of the river above is decidedly pretty. All three bridges, indeed, afford pleasant prospects up and down the stream. The breadth of the river at this season is about sixty yards ; the water is of a pale blue colour, and deep enough to be unfordable. The banks are low, and lined with gardens, willow-trees, or water-meadows. Channels taken off higher up-stream flow through the lanes of Julfa, between rows of pollard mulberries and elms. On either side of the watercourse are the dead mud-plastered walls of houses, varied here and there by a row of shops. Between wall and watercourse, a narrow path serves for a road. The whole lane will not be more than twenty feet broad ; the pathway, not more than six or eight feet. It is extremely easy to lose one's way in the tortuous windings of these lanes. Julfa lies at the bottom of the foot-slope of the hills which enclose the plateau of Isfahan on the south. From the walls of the village to the foot of the hills themselves is only three miles. They rise a thousand feet, and are bare brown masses of rock, not devoid of a certain picturesqueness.

I often rode from Julfa to the city. On crossing the bridge, one enters the avenue of plane-trees known as Chahar Bagh. The trees have been magnificent, but are hollow and broken now, chipped away inside for fuel till the merest shell of each stately chinár is left standing. Ten years hence none will remain. There are tanks in the avenue, and the original design was one long water-tank between the trees, with paved walks on either side. One can either ride the whole length of the avenue, or turn aside to the right and enter the city through a roofed bazar, deserted and dusty. In either case, one ultimately reaches the Maidan-i-Shah, or King's Square, a space 300 yards long by 180 broad, with well-kept two-storied barracks all round it, and two mosques with domes, resplendent in coloured tiles, breaking the level line of roofs on two sides. Here the drilling of soldiers was carried on daily during my stay. Austrian uniforms might be seen in plenty. No military foreigners were in Isfahan, but Persian officers, trained by the Austrians in Teheran, had been sent down to help the Zill-us-Sultan to drill his new troops. For the early stages of drill, any sort of person in military or civil authority appeared to suffice. I saw hundreds of youths marching around with a

broad grin on their faces, under the guidance of a few farrashes, who ejaculated sounds supposed to resemble the "Links! Rechts!" of an Austrian drill-sergeant. The regiments directly under the Teheran-trained officers seemed to me to be equal in point of smartness to a remote and neglected band of Anglo-Indian Volunteers. Their weapons were old rifles, of very large bore; their uniform, a blue tunic and trousers, faced with red, and a black felt cap. Their arms were kept fairly clean, and the uniform, when new, did not look unbecoming. One day a sham fight took place in the square. Certain insignificant trenches were dug across one end, and were held by half the regiments employed, while the other half, rushing boldly down the open square, stormed them with firing and confusion. The Zill-us-Sultan takes a great interest in these displays. One evening, Sayyid Ali and I looked on at the drilling, till I left him and went to Julfa. Next day, Sayyid Ali told me what adventures had befallen him in my absence. The Sârim ud Daulat, or Home Secretary (but, indeed, these Persian titles correspond with no exactitude to English names of office), came and summoned him to the Prince's side, who asked him if he was a Turk. On his explaining that he was a

Persian, who had lived seven years in India, the Prince began a tirade against the English. Did the Farangi intend to go into *his* mountains to make a map of them? The English wanted to get a footing in the country, to conquer all nations with the pen; but they should not conquer Persia. They had not the *insaniyyat* and *saddâqat* (humanity and truthfulness) of the Russians; not one grain of either. What did Sayyid Ali think of his soldiers, on the Austrian model? What were the English soldiers like? And when Sayyid Ali, whose sojourn in India had given him a strong bias in favour of the English, ventured to praise them, the Prince charged him with want of patriotic feeling. "Let me see you again," he said, and dismissed Sayyid Ali, whom the Sârim ud Daulat afterwards rejoined, and lamented the Russian sympathies of the Zill-us-Sultan. "Indeed," he said, "you might as well call him a Russian General." He then went on to wonder why the English shut their eyes to the growth of Russian influence in Persia. "There are no Englishmen here who take any interest in these matters. I have long been wishing to meet with an Englishman to whom I could disburden my heart." Thus said the Sârim ud Daulat, as reported by Sayyid Ali. Unfortu-

nately, I never took the trouble to call on the Sârim ud Daulat and hear his sentiments for myself, so I have them only at second-hand. Still, considering how fond educated Persians are of politics, it is not improbable that he would choose to talk in this way to a well-bred and travelled countryman; though his purpose in so doing is not to be guessed.

I am bound to confess a certain embarrassment in writing of the Prince. It is a mean thing to travel through a country under letters of safe-conduct, and then turn round in London and decry its ruler. And in the present case that would be not only ungenerous, but unjust; for the Zill-us-Sultan deserves commendation for desiring the prosperity of his subjects, and for working towards that in a really effective way, in spite of all the hindrances that surround him. There are certain minor faults which may be safely ascribed to any great man in the East; indeed, gossip and flattery are supposed to be the trade of courtiers all over the world, and the Prince may easily be forgiven some natural inquisitiveness and vanity. If a new European lady comes to Isfahan, she is visited by the ladies of the court; and if she returns the call, the Prince can take the opportunity of seeing her too, and may subsequently express

his opinion of her in familiar conversation with male European friends. His age, I believe, is two-and-thirty, but it is the rule of etiquette to estimate it at much less, and one's own age at considerably more, so as to leave the advantage in point of youth with his Royal Highness. The Prince regards himself as an admirable performer on the pianoforte;—as a matter of fact, he cannot play a note; and the case is the same with some other accomplishments. He receives French newspapers, though unable to read French; in fact, his choice of words in his own language is not always the most elegant or refined. On one occasion, the Prince asked an official of his court, who had lived in Paris, to exchange a few sentences in French with a European gentleman, and on assurance by the latter that the Persian's French was good, exclaimed delightedly, *Khaili pidarsukhta ziringast*—a highly unparliamentary fashion of expressing admiration of his follower's cleverness. These little failings are of small importance; but the execution, or rather murder, of the two Bâbi merchants three years ago has left a stain on the Prince's character which not even the consideration of his comparative youth and inexperience can wholly remove. They were



two respectable merchants, against whom the Imam-i-Juma, or chief ecclesiastical authority of Isfahan, for pecuniary reasons, had conceived a grudge. That they were in secret Bâbis, does not seem to be denied; but there are thousands of Bâbis in the Shah's dominions, and nobody had ever alleged that these two men were not quiet and loyal subjects. The Imam-i-Juma, however, raised the fanatic spirit among the mullas and their adherents, while respectable Isfahan looked on helplessly. The two unfortunate men were brought bound before the Prince, in the presence of the chief merchants convoked for that purpose. M. Collignon was himself a witness of this scene. He rose at once and grasped the captives by the hand, addressing them as he had been accustomed to do in the days of their liberty. They wept, and asked the other merchants what dishonourable thing they had done that their old friends and brother-traders should sit thus aloof. One by one the merchants, moved to shame, imitated M. Collignon's example, and before the meeting broke up the Prince had promised that no harm should happen to the men. But the mullas returned, talked the Prince over, and their victims were put to death. It is but fair to the Zill-us-Sultan to

add that he was then young in his government, that threats had been used of setting Isfahan in rebellion, and that he yielded much against his will. Nobody believes that such a crime could be perpetrated now. The Imam i Juma fell out of favour. He and his victims have been judged by this time. In Gulpaigan I heard the news of his death.

I saw the Prince for the first time in one of his evening promenades. His carriage came lumbering down the street, preceded by the customary miscellaneous troop of men on horseback, mule-back, and donkey-back. I drew up in an archway, to let the procession pass, and thought it only common courtesy to raise my hat. On the 4th of June I was admitted to an interview. The palace buildings are neither lofty nor pretentious, and can hardly be old. They are lost among bazars and houses, and though I visited them twice, I have been unable to carry away any impression more definite than a vague picture of courtyards and gardens set with tall fir-trees, flowers, and fountains; rooms and corridors opening on the same; sentinels at all corners; and a throng of official personages of all sorts. This maze of low buildings, however, possesses some rooms which, if not remarkably spacious,

are elaborately decorated. The Prince received me in a room painted and gilded with no contemptible taste. The back of the room was occupied by a large tank, with fountains scattering coolness. Cages of singing-birds were suspended over the water. Behind the tank again was an alcove, so neatly set with mirrors that it seemed to be made of cut glass. The Prince was dressed in an Austrian uniform, which I guessed to be that of a colonel of hussars. His epaulettes of gold were set with the most magnificent brilliants I had ever seen. His face is handsome, notwithstanding a defect in one eye. Affability seems to be a common virtue of the family, as also a simplicity of demeanour, which saves a visitor the trouble of trying to do violence to one's nature and training by the paying of vain compliments. The Teheran mail had come in that morning, and a week's impression of *Le Temps*, *Les Debats*, and *Le Monde Illustré* was lying before the Prince's chair. Taking them up, he asked whether I did not think Persia a poor desolate country after Europe. I replied that I had almost forgotten Europe, but that in some respects Persia seemed to me to enjoy an advantage over India at any rate. He asked

me what I thought of his soldiers. I told him that he seemed to have done a great deal in a short time. "Yes," he said, "the regiments you have seen have all been raised within the last three months. I want to form eighteen regiments of 1000 men each. I believe your English regiments are 500 strong, but I prefer regiments of a thousand. I have three such regiments ready at present." I asked whether they had been trained by Austrian officers; the Prince said, No, but Persian officers had been sent from Teheran for the purpose. In course of time, he hoped to get rid of the most of these, retaining only twenty-four Teheran officers for the eighteen regiments. I asked about his artillery, of which I had seen nothing. "They have sent me breech-loading guns," he said, "from Teheran, but they are too heavy, and I shall send them back. I want mountain-guns. Our Persian roads are over mountains, and guns are of no use if they cannot follow the army." As for cavalry, the Prince would not attempt to form any regiments; he had plenty of Bakhtiari and Kashkai horsemen, who were better adapted to Persian warfare than any regulars. "There is no necessity," he added, "in this country, of fighting a battle in the

plain ; and in the hills, our men can do better than European troops." After the usual number of qalyans and cups of coffee, I rose to take my leave. The Prince asked whether I had been treated with civility on my journey. I was able to answer very heartily in the affirmative. " I hope," said the Zill-us-Sultan, " that your travels will result in good for Persia, and strengthen the friendship between our country and yours. In my own provinces, I trust you will receive that assistance and attention which I always order to be paid to all European travellers, of whatever nationality." So I came away, having formed an opinion of the Prince decidedly favourable.

The recent changes in the government of Persia are known to every one. The nominal heir-apparent, or Wali Ahd, who is of Kajar blood-royal on both sides, governed Azarbaijan ; and affairs in Azarbaijan did not go on smoothly. There were bread riots in Tabriz, followed by the invasion of the Kurds ; the Wali Ahd showed himself plainly unequal to the conjuncture, and was recalled to Teheran. Meanwhile the Zill-us-Sultan, though his mother was no Kajar princess, has been gradually rising into the place of favourite son

to the Shah. Older than the Wali Ahd, he surpasses the latter in judgment, experience, and strength of character; and, by a series of accessions, his jurisdiction now extends over little less than one-half of Persia. Fars was given to him in April (1882). That troublesome province, embracing all southern Persia, except a strip of Biluchistan in the east, and a strip of Arabistan on the west, had been reduced to order under the severe rule of the Mutamid ud Daulat. I have already mentioned the recall of this Prince. His place has been taken by the Zill-us-Sultan's young son Jalal ud Daulat, aided by a prudent vizier. Fars, however, is not the most recent accession to the Zill-us-Sultan's wide dominions. Karman-shah was made over to him early in June, and it was believed that Kurdistan would follow. And so-called Arabistan, that is, the country from Dizful and Shustar to the sea, is already under his sway.

The prince invested with these exceptional powers has at least this merit as a governor, that his subjects are generally contented. Their superior prosperity is unmistakable. It need not all be due to good government, and indeed two obvious causes may be found in the com-

parative immunity of these parts of Persia from famine, and in the rapid development of the opium trade. Isfahan is a lodge in a garden of poppies, and every field under this crop yields a far better return to its owner than the wheat or barley of former years. The small landowners have profited accordingly, and evidences of comfort and plenty are to be seen in all the surrounding villages. Credit is due to the Zill-us-Sultan for removing all obstacles in the way of the opium trade. To encourage it directly is a more difficult matter, and I am not sure whether any good results can be expected, in a country like Persia especially, from the new system of inspection of opium by a State official, to ensure its purity. In truth, the whole future of Persian opium is uncertain, depending upon the caprices of the seasons and of the Government. The trade may die out faster than it has grown up, or it may expand into something like a rival (shall one say, successor?) to the Indian monopoly. Meanwhile, to keep Isfahan in grain, the Prince has ordered that men shall sow one *jarib* of cereals for every four of poppy; but I doubt if this order is obeyed even in the environs of the city. The Prince is said to have prevented a scarcity in Isfahan last year, by the familiar Oriental

method of compelling bakers to sell at a fixed price. I have already mentioned the relief sent by him to Yazd, and the suspension of revenue accorded to the poorer land-owners. The praises of a superior, in the mouth of an Oriental subject, need not bear any relation to the truth; yet it seems a circumstance not wholly meaningless when the peasants of many villages unite (as I have heard for myself) in bearing witness to the better administration of the land-revenue since the Zill-us-Sultan has been in power. It is impossible to predict how long this happy condition will endure. The Prince may become less considerate as he feels himself firmer in his seat; or he may be whirled out of it by sudden change.<sup>1</sup> It is, perhaps, due to necessity or intrigue, rather than to policy, that the heir-apparent has been called to live in retirement, while the sovereignty of half Persia is in the hands of his half-brother, whom a formal defect excludes from the succession. The partisans of the Zill-us-Sultan appear to muster strong in the province of Isfahan. I have heard men say that if the Shah wishes the

<sup>1</sup> Since these words were written, the change has begun to come. Last winter the Prince was deprived of several of his new governments, and now retains little more than Isfahan.



prosperity of Persia, he should lease it all out to his eldest son. If asked what would be likely to happen in the event of the Shah's sudden decease, they give an evasive answer, knowing that a civil war would not be improbable. The mullas are said to favour the Wali Ahd, and if the troops in Teheran followed their lead, the issue of the contest could scarcely be doubtful. It will be long before Isfahan is able to rival the capital in military strength; besides, the legal heir might count on support from the European ambassadors. The Zill-us-Sultan would be glad to obtain recognition of his present authority by England or India. I myself was sounded as to whether the Viceroy would acknowledge a congratulatory letter sent by the Prince to Calcutta; whether the Foreign Minister would accept presents sent to London. The same purpose, no doubt, underlay that talked-of scheme of the Prince's for obtaining some reduction of the duty upon Persian opium in India.

Concerning the politics of Isfahan, this much will suffice. Julfa merits a few words to itself. In a sojourn of twenty days I became pretty well acquainted with Julfa society. Its hospitality is as great as that of any Indian station. The number of Europeans is larger than in a

small Indian station. Besides the telegraph staff, who are three or four in number—there are M. Collignon and his assistant, and the missionaries who conduct the Armenian school. Non-Europeans are a few English-speaking Armenians, the Armenian archbishop, and the Roman Catholic priest. In such a mixed community, the diversity of language is sometimes rather confusing. For my part, I stuck to English and Persian, being persuaded that any attempts in French or German would speedily degenerate into *Farsi harf mizanid*. Dining out once, I found myself in polyglot company as follows:—three of the guests talked Dutch to one another, French to the hostess, and German to the host. I talked English to my host, and Persian to my hostess and to the Roman Catholic padre; the latter dignitary conversed with the Armenian archbishop in Turkish; and the host and hostess addressed each other, and their children, in Russian. I was also offered the choice of Arabic by the padre, but respectfully declined. Two ladies of the party, when not spoken to in Persian, entertained each other with a brisk interchange of sentiments in Armenian. It will be perceived, perhaps, that there are certain difficulties in the way of “getting up” anything in

Julfa. Yet, what seemed to me to be the great disadvantage of the place, was far less the confusion of tongues than the cramped style of living. The lanes are narrow, and stuffed full of trees; the houses, though provided with good courtyards, are deficient in openness, and command no view at all. There is no place of public resort where all Julfa can meet and amuse itself. These drawbacks, which are not the fault of the Julfa people, will hardly be removed while Julfa society remains in its present imperfect state of organization; moreover, their removal would cost more money than the little community is able to afford. Nevertheless, life in Julfa is well provided with what are called "creature-comforts." The table is more cheaply supplied in Persia than in India, and with better food. Excellent mutton can be bought in the bazar, and occasional beef. The vegetables are very good indeed. I had beans, haricots, spinach, and lettuces; cabbages and cauliflowers are winter vegetables. Our dessert consisted of cherries and apricots, with delicious little cucumbers, which are counted here as a fruit. The next fruits in season are melons and nectarines, and then the whole series of English fruits until the winter. But the most extraordinarily

cheap article is wine. It can be made in the house for twopence-halfpenny a bottle, of a quality decidedly superior to the common *lal sharab* or claret which Anglo-Indians are doomed to drink. It is more like good Chianti wine than anything else. The colour is red, and is darker in old wine than new. I have drunk excellent old wine in the houses of some Armenian friends. The new wine, however, is more commonly used, and for a breakfast or light dinner-wine it seemed to me pretty nigh perfection. A white wine, not unlike dry pale sherry, is grown in Hamadan.

By the kindness of the Rev. Mr. Hoernle, who filled the place of the Rev. Mr. Bruce during the absence of the latter on a visit to England, I was able to see the Armenian school, both for girls and boys. It was satisfactory to see so much good work done. The Rev. Mr. Hoernle had some two years' experience of Indian schools in the Meerut district. I also was not altogether unqualified to speak on that subject; but our opinions differed as to the comparative quickness of Indian and Armenian children. From the style of reading, from answers given to a few questions, and from the quickness and correctness with which sums were worked out, I formed a decided

opinion in favour of the Armenian. On one matter at least there could be no dispute; nobody could pretend that these rosy-cheeked, well-dressed children were not far prettier than the dusky, dirty, and half-naked pupils of the chief school in an Indian district. The school buildings cover a considerable area. A dispensary has recently been attached to the school, and is already much appreciated by Armenians and Persians alike.

Towards the end of my stay in Isfahan, I called on the Ilkhani of the Bakhtiaris. He had been summoned to the city by the Prince, much to his disgust, and sat there grumbling at the heat and closeness, and regretting his airy tents in the high valleys of his native mountains. These mountains I wished to visit; and the Ilkhani was good enough to give me a mounted attendant. The Ilkhani was worth visiting for his own sake. He is a big burly man, with all a mountaineer's simplicity in language and apparel, yet possessing a respectable knowledge of European politics. He asked us the latest news from Greece and Albania, and professed a liking for Englishmen, which seemed to be expressed at least with sufficient heartiness.

Isfahan boasts a newspaper. It appears once a week, and is called the *Farhang*. The editor is the hakimbashi, or court physician of the prince,—a well-educated Persian, speaking French fluently, and holding liberal views. We breakfasted with him one day, and I saw him several times during my stay in Isfahan. On one of these occasions he showed me a map which he had made on the districts of the upper course of the Zaindarud. It was very neatly and accurately done, and enabled me to correct my own map. The hakimbashi, like other Persians, seemed to believe that Russian influence was fast supplanting English influence in Persia; and to regret the fact. He added, what I had not heard before, that England was regarded as having deserted the Turks, after inciting them to withstand Russia.

My long halt at Isfahan was caused by the difficulty of getting mules. The muleteers who had come with me from Shiraz were anxious to give their mules rest; so I paid them up and dismissed them. Mules and men had worked well. I had no complaint against either, and the two men told me that they were sorry to leave my service. It was impossible to get new mules till the provincial

governors had left Isfahan. The Prince had called in all the governors of districts in his new provinces, and was engaged in confirming them or appointing others in their stead. Isfahan was full of dignitaries seeking transport back to their districts, and muleteers were afraid to enter the city, lest their mules should be impressed. At length I got six mules, good strong animals, and prepared to march. The shatirbashi and the Yazd ghulam returned to Yazd. Old Zaki Bey was given a small reward and a letter, and went home to Shiraz. He had served me better than any Persian servant except the ghulam Sayyid. I was sorry to see the last of him and his old white horse. In Yazd I had picked up a new groom, and in Isfahan I got rid of him. He had shamed me with his thefts, carrying off cooking pots from every halting-place along the road. By this time I had ceased to expect anything but worthlessness from a Persian servant.

On Sayyid Ali was conferred the honour of an interview with the Prince two days before marching. Certain vague hints were thrown out of employing him as an emissary to London. These delighted Sayyid Ali for a day, and came to nothing, as I expected. I was amused by a

compliment which he paid to the Zill-us-Sultan, after the indirect manner on which Persians pride themselves. The Prince had happened to make some remark about hereditary qualities. "True, Huzur-i-Wala," said the courtly Sayyid Ali, who indeed is a man of most excellent address, "yet we have heard that Hatim Tai, for his generosity, was famed over all the world, while his brother defiled a place of worship." The allusion to the comparative merits of the Zill-us-Sultan and the Wali Ahd might escape a European, but not a Persian. It reminded me of the answer given in my hearing by the Turkish ambassador returning from Cabul, to a man who asked him whether he had had any good sport in Afghanistan. The answer was, "Only the hunting of bears." Both question and answer referred to the success of the Turkish mission among the rough Afghans.

Our caravan consisted of six mules, with three muleteers; three servants of mine; our mounted attendant; myself and Sayyid Ali, with three horses and a pony. Total, nine men, five horses, six mules, and a donkey belonging to the chief muleteer.



## CHAPTER III.

## ISFAHAN TO CHAGHÂKHUR.

## TWENTY-THREE FARSAKHS ; SEVEN DAYS.

11th June, *Hasanabad*,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  farsakh.—On the 11th of June, at six o'clock in the evening, Sayyid Ali and the mules marched for *Hasanabad*, a village of *Lahinjan*, some six miles west of *Isfahan*. I followed three hours later, having enjoyed my last dinner under M. Collignon's hospitable roof. It was with much regret that I bade him good-bye, and turned my horse's head to the low saddle-back which separates the plateau of *Isfahan* from the higher plateau of *Lahinjan*. The moonlight showed me my way to *Hasanabad*, where I found an upper room ready for me, and speedily went to sleep.

12th June, *Khairabad*, 3 farsakhs; 6.20 to 9.45 a.m.—Next morning, as the mules were loading, a woman came up with a mare for sale. I rejected the mare, but effected a bargain by which a good-looking colt became mine, in ex-

change for five tomans and the old bay horse. This venerable animal, purchased in Karman, had maintained an unvarying leanness alike on the march and on the halt. Not even the barley measures of Yazd, which fattened the mules into sleekness, could make the least alteration in his condition. He was the slowest beast I ever saw, and minded the whip no more than the ass compared to Ajax. The boys in the bazar used to hoot at Sayyid Ali as he rode to Julfa on his marvellous ill-favoured steed. Overjoyed at the prospect of a better mount, Sayyid Ali exerted all his eloquence to represent the animal as a most desirable acquisition. "This horse," said he, "has such an excellent constitution, that he has marched with us all the way from Karman without showing the least sign of fatigue. If he has a fault, it is perhaps an excess of impetuosity; but if you are not alarmed at that, and leave him alone, you will find that he will not run away. It is true that he had better be ridden with a strong bridle. He is at present somewhat out of condition, but is capable of fattening with extraordinary rapidity. His age may be seven years, or perhaps eight." These recommendations, poured forth with great gravity, in nowise deceived the woman, who proved herself quite a match for

the best of us in bargaining. Having settled this matter, we wandered over the plain of Lahinjan under the direction of our Bakhtiari mounted attendant, who called himself a Khan, and professed the most intimate acquaintance with the whole region, but in reality proved to be a highly unsatisfactory guide. He had some inexplicable purpose in leading us by the shortest stages and most roundabout routes; perhaps that he might prolong his enjoyment of free quarters and rations at my expense, and of whatever private *mudakhil* or perquisites he might be able to extort. After a devious march of three farsakhs, we reached the village of Khairabad, and halted there. In two days we had got only as far as three farsakhs from Isfahan. We had, however, seen something of Lahinjan and the Zaindarud. The bridge over the river at Pul-i-Varghun, midway in our march, afforded a pretty view of blue water, fields of wheat and poppy, and mill-wheels merrily turning on the farther side of the stream. Above Khairabad is a rocky hill 600 feet high. I went out in the afternoon with our Khan and a couple of villagers, crossed the river, which here is about hip-deep, and was rewarded by a good view of Lahinjan from the top of the hill.

The plain is some twelve miles by fifteen—a green expanse thick-studded with villages, shaded by trees, and glittering with silver streams and sheets of water, drawn from the Zaindarud and from its affluent on the north-west. So abundant is the water, that rice can be grown, mosquitoes flourish, and the climate at this season is even feverish, as poor Sayyid Ali found to his cost. I had seldom seen a more populous country; the number of villages is reputed to be 366, and all those through which I passed seemed to be in very comfortable circumstances. A chain of rocky hills bordered the plain on the south and north-west, while the western end is saline clay, with sparse villages. We sat for some time on the hill-top, looking over the pleasant plain and its silver river. The Khan was somewhat slow in the descent, and one of the villagers said to the other, “Ay, he’s a Bakhtiari; if he was a Turk, now, you should see him come down the mountain like a goat.” This was my first hint of that rivalry between Turk and Bakhtiari of which I met with other examples subsequently.

13th June, *Chirmil*, 6 *farsakhs*; 4.30 a.m. to 1.15 p.m.—Our route next day led us over the western hills. At their foot is a *marg* or mea-

dow, the first I had seen in Persia. It was like a level English common, with pools of water; but here and there glittered the white efflorescence of salt. Beyond this, on the foot-slope of the hills, we passed a space of ground half a mile square, enclosed by a mud wall. The wall was built by Shah Abbas for his menagerie, and the place is called so (*Bagh-i-Wahsh*) to this day. The mud wall is generally in good repair, though more than two centuries old—a proof of the dryness of the climate. On the top of the low saddle-back we passed a tufangchi station called Gay-i-Pisa or Spotted Cow, whence we looked down on the Zaindarud under quite a new aspect. The river here flows from west to east, before turning sharp round the western hills and entering Lahinjan at right angles to its former course. Though immediately below us, the river was invisible, being hidden between its deep-cut banks; but as it passes eastward, the banks recede, and we could see the green valley broadening in the distance, till the river disappeared behind the end of the ridge, and came out again on the Lahinjan side behind us. Taking a last look at Lahinjan, we began to descend the long slope of the ridge, and to enter on the region known as Chahar Mahâl. Beyond

the valley rose a range of mountains called Kuh-i-Rukh, at whose feet could be seen several villages, among them Chirmil, our destined halting-place. We marched straight down the slope seven miles, then in an oblique direction towards the right, getting gradually down to the river, but it lay so deep that only after five miles did we catch sight of the water, and discovered a whole string of villages hidden away under the high bank. The narrow valley yields space for but a slender margin of copse and cultivation between the swift stream and the little hills that hem it in. The Zaindarud is clearer and fuller here than in its lower courses, where it has to water wide harvests ; its colour is the loveliest blue, and it flows with a broad even current between long fields of wheat and poppy, or under the shade of willows and mulberries. The steep slopes above the fields are clothed with straggling villages, Armenian and Persian. We passed one called The Musalman's, and next to it another called The Messiah's. For three miles our road wound along the river-side, through a succession of charming vistas, to the soft murmur of the stream, or the brawling of petty waterfalls tumbling over many a mill-head. Opposite the village of

Naugarân, an old broken bridge crosses the stream; I lingered over the lovely view to be had from its ruined arches. We had now to ascend the opposite bank, and march four miles to Chirmil, on the foot-slope of Kuh-i-Rukh. The kalantar gave me good quarters in a large room with a fine old window of stained glass. I had tea with him in the evening, and he sent me a good dinner.

14th June, *Kâvarukh*, 4 *farsakhs*; 4.40 to 10 a.m.—We had to cross the Rukh range next day, by a pass 600 feet high, with a good road, though steep towards the top. At the tufangchis' station we halted and looked back on the valley of the Zaindarud, while the mules came up. The upper part of the valley is as wild and rocky as one could desire. The back of the ridge crossed yesterday breaks down upon the river in a billowy mass of shelves and knolls of rock, and the river can be traced only by the lips of the *cañon* in which it flows; but the lower valley is broad and green and full of villages. We turned our backs on the Zaindarud, and began to descend towards another river-system. The slope extends about six miles to *Kâvarukh*, and abounds in huge cockroaches of a green and black colour, as long as one's forefinger, and thick in proportion. They crawl

gravely over the stones and gravel, and apparently subsist on the same ; if your horse puts his foot down near one of them, the alarmed insect chirps and whistles vigorously. We had gone but a little way down the slope, when, on clearing the shoulder of a hill, snow-topped mountains once more came into view. The mountain before us was the Kuh i Jahan-Bin or World-view, but beyond it, to the right, the topmost peaks of Zarda Kuh rose over the intervening ranges. One of these peaks, a pyramid of snow, was seen and recognized by us at intervals in our subsequent marches, till we reached the foot of Zarda Kuh itself. Descending the slope, and turning round a promontory of the hills, we arrived at Kâvarukh. We had been warned that we should find the country treeless, and so it proved ; but the broad fields, well watered by a little river, redeemed the place from an appearance of desolation. The people said they had walnut-trees, which perished by drought some years ago. Behind the village are vineyards. A spring breaks from the slope we descended, and joins the little river below. We went to the kalantar's house, where I found quarters under an open archway. Going out with the Khan in the afternoon, I heard from him the story of the Jahanbin mountain. A



princess of Cashmere, named Samanbar (Jasmine-bosom), came to spend the summer on the mountain with her maidens. One Haidar Beg, a warrior youth of Isfahan, came upon her tents as he followed the chase. She invited him to dinner. He fell in love with her and became melancholy. She ascribed his melancholy to want of cash, and gave him a hundred tomans. He returned the money, explaining that what he wanted was herself. Upon this the princess, waxing wroth, quoted poetry—

*Na dāni ki mada shir, hangām i jang,  
Bavad afgand shir i nar ba ahang?*

“Don’t you know that the lioness, in time of conflict, can overthrow the lion with her charge?” Haidar Beg ventured to dispute this zoological thesis, so the princess put her harness on and fought with him till the going down of the sun. He contented himself with warding off her strokes, till she was obliged to use her eyes as well as her sword, and having ogled Haidar Beg till she put him off his guard, she caught him a rap over the skull that laid him bleeding at her feet. As he seemed a nice sort of young fellow, she bound up his wound, and left him lying in a tent, with a purse of gold suspended over his head ; and marched back to

Cashmere. Haidar Beg awoke in due time and returned crestfallen to Shah Abbas. The princess had meanwhile contrived to fall in love with him, and finding that the king of Cashmere meant to bestow her hand upon one of his nobles, she sent a messenger to Isfahan. Haidar Beg set out for Cashmere in the disguise of a merchant, and sent the purse of gold to the princess as a token. She bade him climb the wall of her palace by night, but was chagrined at his coldness when they thus came together. He explained that he was not sure whether she had not been married already, in which case he begged leave to go home again. Her reply to his, couched in language much too vigorous for quotation, removed his scruples, and the lovers fled away and were happily married in Isfahan. The tale came to an end as we re-entered Kavarukh after dark.

15th June, *Sartishni*, 4 *farsakhs* ; 5.10 a.m. to 10 a.m.—Next morning, as we were marching across the Kavarukh plain, in delightfully cold morning air, I called upon the Khan to repeat his story for Sayyid Ali's benefit. This he did, but with such endless digressions and amplifications, that one began to grow rather weary of it. "It's all true," said the Khan, by way of stimulating our flagging interest. "Heaven

forbid," replied Sayyid Ali, "that I should doubt such divine revelations (*aiyât i âsmâni*); but in fact the morning is so cold that I can't help wishing we were out of the shadow of this mountain." We were riding southward, under the shadow of a great hill on our left, and with the snow-streaked sides of Jahanbin on our right, half lighted and half in shade. We next ascended a low ridge, and found ourselves among mountain-tops. A clear cold spring flowed through grass and flowers. There were wild hollyhocks, white, pale yellow, and violet-coloured; daises, vetches, a kind of white Canterbury-bell, and the night-blooming ceres. On the farther side lay the Sartishni valley, and above it that of Gishnagan. The Khan went off to Gishnagan on some errand of his own, while we held on our way to Sartishni. The villages of Chahar Mahal are quite destitute of trees, and present a dry, grey, and forlorn appearance. But they are very well off for water. Here at Sartishni is a respectable little river, which waters the Gishnagan plain above and the village of Kharâzi a farsakh below Sartishni, before it sinks between high banks like an Indian nullah, and becomes useless for irrigation. The plain is hemmed in on all sides by mountains;

to the south-west is a defile through which the river makes its way, and beyond that we could see the snow-streaked sides of the Kuh-i-Sukhta, which runs south-east as far as Chaghâkhur.

16th June, *Kahru*,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  *farsakhs*.—We marched down this defile next day, and crossed the river by a bridge at Kharâzi. Here is much poppy. I was riding in advance, and had a conversation with the villagers before my mules came up. They were very friendly, gave me a qalyan, and asked the price of opium in Isfahan. I told them eleven to fourteen tomans the shahman, but they valued their opium at sixteen tomans. The village is treeless, like the rest, but stands in the midst of broad green fields, which make a pretty prospect between the hills. At the mouth of the defile we turned to the left, and crossed a spur of hills into the long valley which extends westward from Kahru to Junagân. It is bounded by the Kuh-i-Sukhta along its southern side, and watered by a river which receives the drainage of the northern valleys. At the head of the valley stands Kahru. I had a large upper room in the kadkhuda's house; he himself was in Chaghâkhur, but returned in the evening and came to see me. The afternoon

was spent in climbing a hill with a couple of the villagers. The hill side was covered with coarse grass, flowers, and sweet scented herbs. My companions explained the uses to which some of these were put, and asked me the qualities of others; I could only regret my want of botanical knowledge, and answer, like the clown in *All's Well that Ends Well*, "I am no great Nebuchadnezzar; I have not much skill in grass." The sheep in these mountain regions depend upon dried herbage for winter food. Outside the villages are stacked numerous piles of kikizak (a tall herb, pale yellow, with a faint scent), of milk thistles, and of that yellow-headed umbelliferous weed so common in ill-kept Irish pasture-fields; these were drying in the sun, with a view to storage. From various kinds of mint, elixirs (*araq*) are extracted; the large white anemone is beaten up with eggs and used to bind up broken bones; and the flower of the wild hollyhock is made into a wash for the hair, and is also taken as cooling medicine. There is a good deal of poppy in Kahru. From the top of the hill, we looked southward to the long snowy ridge of Kuh-i-Sukhta, and north-westwards over a valley where the Armenian village of Marmakâ lay embosomed in vineyards.

We descended past two black tents, the first Bakhtiari tents I had seen. Kahru is well watered by the brook which rises in the gorge leading to Chaghâkhur, and tumbles charmingly over two mill-heads above the village. There are also two springs from the northern hills. What the place wants is the shade of foliage. At dinner I finished the stock of wine with which the hakimbashi had kindly equipped me.

*17th June, Chaghâkhur, 2 jarsakhs.*—Our next stage was Chaghâkhur. We had heard so much of this place since leaving Isfahan, that we approached it with a lively curiosity. The Ilkhani had told me that the best way to see the Bakhtiari mountains would be to march first to Chaghâkhur, visit the Ilbegi there, and then go on to Zarda Kuh and the Kuran water. Chaghâkhur is the summer residence of the Ilkhani; but during his absence in Isfahan, the Ilbegi or vice-chief of the clans manages affairs there. We had been told that the place was worth seeing; and, in fact, after ascending the gorge along the joyous Kahru brook, and entering a valley between mountain-sides dotted with black tents, we crossed the final ridge, and looked down on a novel style of Persian landscape. It was a fair green meadow,

filling a hollow in the hills some seven miles long by three broad. On the northern or left-hand edge lay a shallow mere, reaching into the middle of the plain; the southern edge was bounded by the Kuh-i-Kallâ, a spur of Sukhta, with sidelong lines and bands of snow, and its summit one snowy field. The south-western end of the plain lay immediately below us, dotted all over with black tents, grazing cattle, droves of mares and mules, and all the wealth of a pastoral people. In hollows and nooks of the mountain-side, wherever a brighter greenness revealed the presence of a spring, black tents were to be seen solitary or in social circle. Across the plain, the tall white pavilions of the Ilbegi stood conspicuous. In the middle of the plain is a rocky knoll, which of course is occupied by a fort, and over the gateway of the fort is a handsome suite of apartments furnished with costly English carpets, and with chairs and couches lined with Kashan velvet; chandeliers hang from the ceiling, and the walls are set with mirrors, and adorned with small original paintings of the chase in Persia, and with familiar pictures of lovely woman, copied from French prints, recognizable enough. A broad balcony overlooks green pastures, black

tents, and buffaloes wallowing in pools among the water-meadows. We rode to the fort, and had hardly taken up our quarters, when the Ilkhani's brother called on me, and after him two sons of the Ilkhani and two of the Ilbegi, and in the evening the Ilbegi himself, who seemed perhaps not so friendly to the English as the burly Ilkhani. After asking me what route I intended to take, he began to talk politics, and rather astonished me by the extent of his knowledge. He wanted to know whether war between Greece and Turkey had begun. It was difficult to make him believe that we had no design of annexing Afghanistan, but meant to leave that country in perfect independence. "No, no," he said, "Afghanistan is as good as yours. The English turn everybody to ridicule. You conquer countries by cleverness. Russia conquers countries by killing and getting killed, but you, where force is of no avail, conquer by money. You flung Russia against Turkey; then, when the one was prostrate and the other lame, you said, 'Advance no step farther.'"<sup>1</sup> He believed that Turkey would ultimately be

<sup>1</sup> The words of the Ilbegi were as follows :—Angrizha hama-ra rishkhand misazand. Shuma mulk-ra ba ustâdi migirid. Rus mulk migirad ba kushtan wa kushtan dadan,



divided among the European Powers. The Kurdish rising was due to the disturbed condition of Turkey, and the consequent want of troops on the frontiers. Shaikh Obaidullah had been surrendered by Turkey, and carried captive to Tabriz on his way to Teheran. (This last piece of news was entirely incorrect.) The Ilbegi proposed a picnic next day in a grove situated in a dell above the farther end of the plain; to which I gladly assented.

*18th and 19th June, halt at Chaghâkhur.*—Next morning, the Ilkhani's sons called for me at a quarter to nine, and we rode down the plain, a numerous cavalcade. The Bakhtiari youth beguiled the way with the shooting of larks. Among other things, they shot a herd-boy. Any rider, pacing leisurely along, can hit a hovering lark within easy range, if his horse do not absolutely stand on its head or its heels; but I did see two good shots made at a smart canter, while the bird was in rapid flight. The young nobility have good breech-loaders, and consume (the Ilbegi said) a thousand tomans worth of cartridges yearly. It is possible; they

lekin shuma jai ki zur-tân namirasad, ba pul migirid. Shuma Rus-ra ru-i Rum andakhtid; ba'd, ki in tabah wa ân lang shud, guftid, "Pa naguzar pîsh."

have nothing to do all day long, and are entirely destitute of any principle that should prevent them from letting drive at every sparrow. The dell proved to be a most pleasant place. We breakfasted by the side of a small stone tank, under the tender green and fragrant shade of walnut-trees, and within the hearing of falling water. But the Ilbegi and his crew had come for other purposes than admiration of the beauties of nature. They lost no time in producing a pack of cards, and played brag till within an hour of sunset. Persian cards are five and twenty, but the varieties are only five—ace, king, queen, knave, and dancer (*raqqâsa*, which the Bakhtiaris pronounce *lakkâda*). The players solemnly assured me that the game is an old national one: but I am sure the devices on the cards are neither Persian nor ancient. The ace is a lion entwined with a dragon, the queen a Madonna and Child, the *soldier*, or knave, a rider with a footman, the dancer a drunken Dutch woman pouring gin into a cup, which a child stands on tiptoe to reach after. The stakes were five *qirans* each to begin with, but soon rose to a toman, the result being that the Ilbegi's son, among others, lost sixty tomans. I left them at their game, and wandered up the

grove, under ample shades, beside the clear musical brook. It was a pretty spot, and the bird which they call the nightingale in this country was uttering its short sweet song at intervals, putting summer rhymes into one's head :—

By shallow rivers, to whose falls  
Melodious birds sing madrigals;

and so, having found a quiet place, I had a bathe under a little waterfall, “in beechen green and shadows numberless,” and afterwards lay on the grass and looked up into the leafy tracts between me and the sunlight,—

Annihilating all that's made,  
To a green thought in a green shade.

One of the Ilbegi's sons held a lively conversation with me during breakfast, while we were eating excellent roast ribs of lamb, without aid of knife or fork. The Bakhtiaris, he said, used not to pay tribute to Isfahan; they pay 10,000 tomans annually now. But for intestine divisions, they could march down and seize Isfahan. They are ancient rivals of the Kashkais, and claim to have driven the latter out of Chaghâkhur; yet the Kashkais at Gandamun are only five farsakhs south of Chaghâkhur. Was

I a Whig or a Tory? and what did I think of the present political situation of Persia? I explained that Persia seemed to me to be lucky in three things, internal quiet, freedom from debt, and remoteness from meddlesome Europe. He assented, but added a fourth advantage which seemed to him the chief of all—namely, the impracticability of mountain-passes where a few men could stop a host. (For my part, I have no belief in any Persian passes stopping an army which should once have got over the real difficulty of transport and food.) “Suppose,” he continued, “that the Russians should take Merv and march on Herat; what would the English do then? After all, it is India at which the Russians are aiming. As for us, we do not wish to fall under Russian influence. We have fought against the Russians several times, but they are too strong for us.” As we rode home, the Ilkhani’s son talked with me in much the same strain. He began by postulating that England was at enmity with Russia (*bâ Rus bad ast*), and asked me to tell him true which side would win if it came to war. England, of course, was superior by sea, but Russia had a million and a half of soldiers. Suppose the Russians were at Candahar, with an army for

the invasion of India. and with the Afghans as allies? Perhaps it was the native marauding spirit of the young Bakhtiari that rendered him incapable of appreciating my objection that the Afghans would never admit the Russians into their country for the mere hope of sharing in the plunder of India. In the military power of England he seemed to have a pretty vigorous disbelief; even India had been conquered more by astuteness than by arms. Persia, he said, was the true road to India. The Persians would never voluntarily submit to Russian domination. But what could England do as an ally? If England was really able to help the Central Asian Mussalmans to recover their freedom, why didn't she do it? Passing on to the Irish "rebellion," as he called it, the Ilkhani's son asked me whether the cause was not excessive revenue demand; and then proceeded to show that he had some acquaintance with modern European history by asking if all Europe did not owe its freedom to England, which was the first country to withstand the Pope, and defeated and sank his navy.

*19th June.*—Next morning the young men called again. The Ilkhani's son declared his adhesion to Galileo's theory of the movement

of the earth round the sun, despite universal incredulity in his clan. Moreover, it appeared that he was one of the party of Persian pilgrims to Mecca in whose company Mr. Blunt and Lady Anne Blunt journeyed for some time in their recent travels in Arabia, when they visited the mountain-region of Najd. The Ilkhani's son professed great admiration for his European friends, whom he used (he said) to visit by night, so as to avoid offending the bigotry of his fellow-pilgrims. Conversation in these visits was carried on through a third person, who spoke French and Persian; the Ilkhani's son also knew a few phrases of Arabic. On my asking him why he did not visit Europe, he replied that he greatly desired to do so, but the tribe were against it, fearing that he would come back estranged. I was much pleased with these young men; the Ilkhani's son especially is a fine manly young fellow, modest, and willing to learn.

Chaghâkhur is deserted and empty throughout the winter. Towards the end of autumn, the Bakhtiaris migrate southwards through the passes in the mountains into the warm plains of so-called Arabistan, near Shustar and Dizful. They return in the end of spring. In their

absence the plain of Chaghâkhur is flooded with snow and rain, and frozen all over; in spring the ice breaks up with loud noises. Chaghâkhur was honoured with a visit from the Prince last spring, but he left it again in disgust, after a week of wind and rain and cold. This severe weather is rather more than buildings of half-baked brick can endure. The back part of the fort fell last year, and the rest will probably follow soon. Nevertheless, a couple of small villages near the dell where we breakfasted remain inhabited through the winter. These have their well-watered cornfields; the nomad Bakhtiaris also cultivate a good deal of unirrigated corn and barley on the mountain-sides, making them look like English uplands, but for the line of rock and snow above. It was pleasant, from the broad balcony above the gateway of the fort, to overlook the green plain, full of life and movement in the golden evening light. Each little tent sent up its spire of blue smoke; the cattle were coming home across the pastures, and droves of mares, followed by their foals, were gathering together for the night. The Ilkhani's mares came in under the gateway as I was looking on. Some

of them were very good animals, showing evident signs of Arab blood.

It is difficult to estimate the number of Bakhtiaris encamped in Chaghâkhur. There may have been fifteen hundred. Two things struck me in the Bakhtiaris, as compared with the Kashkais—their greater poverty, and their less martial appearance. Some of the poorer tents were very poor indeed. Our picnic cavalcade seemed to me less soldierlike and smart than the well set-up Kashkai horsemen. Both these impressions of mine were strengthened by what I saw in our further travels. I made some remark to the Ilbegi on the poverty of his people. “The truth is,” said he, “that they have been accustomed to eke out their living by other methods until lately;” alluding to their hereditary habits of depredation, which the Zill-us-Sultan (it is said) has checked. I was assured that a few years ago it would have been impossible for me to march across the pass beyond Kâvarukh without being stopped and stripped. But this I greatly doubt, seeing that Messrs. Mackenzie and Robertson have repeatedly travelled in these mountains, and indeed have left their names as household words



among the Bakhtiaris. The welcome accorded to Englishmen is in a great measure due to the kindly memory of Mr. Mackenzie which survives among the black tents. It is unfortunately difficult for one who follows his footsteps in these regions to make anything like the favourable impression that he succeeded in leaving on the minds of the people.

As for the military power of the Bakhtiaris, they might, no doubt, surprise Isfahan, but they never could hold it. It was amusing to note what a lively recollection they still retained of the chastisement they received from Nadir Shah a century and a half ago.

There are two places marked on the map, to the north of Shustar, as Kalah-i-Diz and Diz Malakan, with notes of interrogation. The Ilbegi told me something about these. The first seems to be called Diz Shahi; it is sixteen farsakhs from Dizful, and is a precipitous mountain, with water and grass on the top. Sheep have to be hoisted up an inclined plane of poles. Diz Malakan is only four farsakhs from Dizful, and has a rocky staircase by which sheep can climb to the top of the mountain; it will feed fifty sheep, and yields also fifty knarwars of grain. As for the name, *dizh* or

*dazh* means a fortress, and is so used frequently in the *Shahnama*.

As far as Chaghâkhur we had been marching west and south-west. We were now to march west and north-west from this point to Zarda Kuh.

## CHAPTER IV.

## ZARDA KUH.

## NINETEEN FARSAKHS ; SEVEN DAYS.

20th June, *Dast-i-Nâ*, 4 *farsakhs*; 4.45 to 8.50 a.m.—Marching back from Chaghâkhur to Kahru, we left that village on our right, and held on down the long valley to Shâlamzâr, and thence to *Dast-i-Nâ*, where a foot messenger despatched by the Ilbegi had prepared quarters for us. Flies abounded, but I was able to shut them out of the cool inner room assigned to me. In the afternoon I went out and bathed in the Shâlamzâr and *Dast-i-Nâ* river. This comes originally from Kahru, but receives great accessions from a swamp at the foot of Sukhta, half-way between the two villages, and on the left of our road. Returning, I joined some villagers sitting under a porch, and was asked questions about the price of opium in India or China, the administration of land revenue in India, the number of days from *Dast-i-Nâ* to

London, and why the Queen of England had not married again. A Turk from Tabriz, whose family had been settled here two or three generations, began to boast of his travels and the lands he had seen. "Ay," said the others, "Tishni and Shâlamzâr." "No," said he, "Jeddah, Aden, and the Qâzimain." I asked him what sort of a place Aden was. He began to describe it as an elysium on earth. "Why, it's a vile place," said I. "Don't expose me before these villagers," he replied; and we all laughed.

21st June, *Junagân*, 2 *farsakhs*; 4.40 to 7 a.m.—The Sukhta mountains, from whose base Dast-i-Nâ is distant only two miles, approach the lower and less continuous range of hills which lines the northern side of the valley. As we marched further down the valley next day, we found that it narrowed into a gorge, through which the river flows, while our road took to the slope of the mountain on our right. We marched under the shade of the mountain, and looked down the slope and across the gorge to the rocky sides of Sukhta opposite, which here were broken by a huge picturesque chasm. After a few miles, we came in sight of the plain of *Mizak*, green and fertile, with many villages, the nearest of which, *Junagân*, was to

be our halting-place. Haycocks stood outside the village, fragrant with sweet mountain-grass. We were now at the back of Jahanbin mountain, and but for my culpable laziness I might have stood on the top of it. Its green sides, rich in springs and grassy ledges, rose invitingly near Junagân. Like all these mountain villages, Junagân has a brook coursing down its main street; the spring comes out of a small hill a quarter of a mile above the village, and passes through a tank which swarms with fish sacred to the three daughters of Imam Musa-i-Qasim, who are represented by three willows on the hill. I regret to say that Sayyid Ali killed one of these fish with a stone, and shocked the villagers, who are proud of their sacred fountain. I had a good bathe in the brook.

22nd June, *Baba Haidar*,  $4\frac{1}{2}$  farsakhs; 5.10 to 11 a.m.—Next morning, after a very cold night, we marched along the slope of the hills on the north-eastern side of the plain, as far as Châlucha. The plain is about twelve miles long by four broad, and exceedingly green and fertile. The river flows in a channel too deep-cut for irrigation, but the mountains all round send forth abundant springs, which water wide

areas of wheat and poppy. It is a place for the confluence of waters from Sartishni, Dast-i-Nâ, Sarishgan (a village in a ravine above Châlucha, whence flows a large brook that we forded on our way), and Baba Haidar. The combined waters make their way through the western mountains, to join the Kuran and drain into the Persian Gulf. From Châlucha we went on to Farsân, the largest of the twelve villages of Mîzak, where is a small mart for the Bakhtiariis. Here we bought rice. From Farsân the road ascends a narrow valley, with a mountain stream below. We were overtaken by the kadkhuda of Baba Haidar, who had been visiting Farsân, and also by Hâji Chiragh Ali, a Bakhtiari chief, owner of the fort of Dîma, near one of the sources of the Zaindarud. He was an elderly man on a lame mare, and kept on telling the kadkhuda about his recent journey to Mecca. A person of more distinction whom we met this day was the Ilkhani's eldest son, a general in the Persian service, who was returning from Teheran. His escort and mules passed us at the distance of 400 yards. I remember them for the sake of the lovely field of wild hollyhocks, pink and white, which intervened between us, and across which I

viewed them in a kind of floral glory. Flowers are abundant all over the plain. We soon lost sight of Mîzak in the windings of our mountain road, and when we reached the tiny plateau on which Baba Haidar stands, the whole range of Zarda Kuh burst magnificently on our view, gladdening the heart with its long and lofty line of snow. Baba Haidar, like the Mîzak villages, is treeless. It is difficult to convey an idea of the quaint appearance of a Persian village when it stands out in all its naked greyness, a clear-cut arrangement of vertical and horizontal lines, so distinctly shown in that most pellucid air. One of the Mîzak villages that we saw to-day was a very striking example of this; it stands on a small isolated knoll, and seems to catch and fix the eye so long as it remains in sight. There is much unirrigated cultivation on the lower slopes of the mountains above the Mîzak plain and also above Baba Haidar. In the evening I went down with a couple of villagers to the river and bathed. They told me that in winter the snow lay a yard deep, and often cut them off from communication with Mîzak for weeks together. The kadkhuda of Baba Haidar was a melancholy man, with a grievance. Last year the

Ilkhani had imprisoned him for three months, and fined him 1000 tomans, for no offence at all, as he declared. I was amused by overhearing a conversation between him, Chiragh Ali, and Sayyid Ali, as I sat in my room with closed doors. The subject of debate was the nations of Farangistan. Sayyid Ali dilated on the power of England, as evinced by the conquest and government of India. The bold Bakhtiaris considered that a trifle. Sayyid Ali attempted to explain. "It is well known," said the Kadkhuda, "that no empire can compare in extent and power to that of Persia." This was accepted as proof conclusive, and was followed by the silent sucking of qalyans. The ideas of the common people regarding Farangistan are naturally vague. In Junagân I was asked whether I was a Farangi or a Russian (*Urûs*).

The people of these mountain villages are much darker than those of the plains, and not nearly so well clad. The women and children standing on the roofs to look at me reminded me of the inhabitants of an Indian village. It seems that the Ilkhani, who owns many of these villages wholly or in part, is a hard landlord; though his son assured me that great care was



taken of the ryots. The whole country was laid waste by the Afghans after they had taken Isfahan in 1722. Many villages have been restored (they all bear names ending in *-an*), but a great part of the country is mere pasture-land still, as we saw when we advanced farther into the mountains. We had to buy and carry with us three days' barley, for which I paid cash down, according to my rule. But the kad-khuda and our Khan were in league together to recover the price from the cultivators and divide it among themselves, which they did, and disgraced me. The Khan was proving himself a travelling companion not wholly desirable. Being the Ilkhani's son-in-law, specially deputed by the Ilkhani to attend us, he could not easily be interfered with; at the same time, his exactions from every village we halted at were uncalled-for and vexatious.

Our caravan received the accession of two donkeys from Baba Haidar. They carried the barley, and fraternized with our own donkey charmingly; in return for which the latter animal taught them the gift, which he possessed in perfection, of braying at all hours of the night. I used to be wakened by his

melody, and fancy myself Mariana in the moated grange :—

Upon the middle of the night,  
Waking she heard the night-fowl crow.

23rd June, *Shurab tents*,  $5\frac{1}{2}$  *farsakhs* ; 4.40 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.—Next morning we marched up a narrow valley which contributes an affluent to the Baba Haidar stream. The road gradually rose along the right-hand side of the valley, with a steep grassy incline below, which reminded me of the *khuds* of Naini Tal. We were marching along the Kuh-i-Chubîn, a favourite hunting-ground of Bahram-i-Gur, or Bahram of the wild ass, so called because he loved the chase of that most unattainable quarry. He is alluded to in a quatrain of Omar Khayyâm's "*Rubaiyât*," as translated by Mr. Fitzgerald :—

They say the lion and the libbard keep  
The halls where Jamshed triumphed and drank deep;  
And Bahram, that great hunter—the wild ass  
Stamps o'er his head, but cannot wake his sleep.

Among the rocks grew a tall flower unseen before, a lovely spire of pink and white bells. The opposite side of the valley was dotted with black tents, some perched high and remote, others on shelves of grass nearer the stream.

Wherever a level space afforded room the fresh green of young crops gladdened the eye. High up on the mountain top were cattle and horses grazing, tended by men who shouted down to us, but the words were lost. This pass was made memorable to us by the chase and capture of a one-eyed black goat, a solitary estray on our side of the valley. Passing the head of the brook, we ascended a plateau, and had a noble view of Zarda Kuh before us and of Jahanbin at the end of the valley, closing all the vista behind. The mountain slopes around the plateau were dotted with tents, and a valley under them was green with crops. The plateau ended in a deep descent upon a river, which we crossed and looked down upon from a rocky steep on the farther side. The marvellous blueness of the water contrasted well with the faint yellow of the cliffs of shale which overhang it. I sat and looked on delightedly while the mules climbed the rocky road. We now descended gently into the high plain of the Golden Fountain (*zarin chashma*), a beautifully green plain, with abundance of pasturing cattle, mares, and mules. The spring breaks out under a rocky ridge midway in the left-hand side of the plain, and flows away in a stream forty feet broad and

two feet deep; the water is very cold and clear. Here were black tents, to which we were invited; the women gave us capital bread-and-butter, cheese and buttermilk, followed by a qalyan. The behaviour of the dogs was noteworthy. At first they flew at us, but as soon as we were welcomed as guests, they lay down peacefully and paid us no further attention. These Bakhtiari dogs are not unlike coarse-bred Scotch collies. Leaving Zarin Chashma and marching by the head of a little rocky gorge through which the stream cuts its way out of the plain, we descended into the valley of Shurab, rode up to a group of six black tents, and asked for quarters. The people pitched two tents for us, and our Khan procured a young sheep, which doubtless cost him nothing, and which he proposed to let us have at an exorbitant price. The sheep was rejected, and the black goat, our prize of the morning, was sacrificed instead. He turned out to be a young animal, and very fair eating. Just before sunset two of my horses got loose, and like that renowned Homeric charger, made straightway for the pastures of the mares. We had a long chase after them, in the course of which I reached the top of a hill, where I

found a solitary shepherd in a sheepskin coat, who seemed much amused at my appearance, and grinned and conversed volubly in his rough Bakhtiari dialect, mostly unintelligible. Besides his conversation, I enjoyed also a magnificent view of Zarda Kuh, white and sunset-flushed. The women cooked me a rice pudding for dinner. It was slightly salt, having been cooked with the brackish milk yielded by sheep that grazed on the banks of a salt stream which we saw next day. Some commotion was created among our hosts by an attack which was made on an isolated tent of their tribe by three or four families at feud with them. The tent was full in view a mile farther down the valley. I asked them why they did not go over and defend their kinsman. They said they were afraid of the Ilkhani, who had prohibited private warfare. After all, no great harm seemed to have been done next morning, for the solitary tent was sending up its blue column of smoke as usual when we bade good-bye to our hosts, and marched.

*24th June, Dizak tents, 1½ farsakh.*—We turned aside to see the salt spring. It comes out at the foot of a grey hill like one of the salt hills of Lar, and flows down a bed white with

saline crystals. Within a few yards a brackish spring breaks out beside it. This latter is drinkable, but the salt spring no human being could drink; it is like an extremely strong solution of table salt in water. These streams join the Zarin Chashma stream and another which flows below our last night's encampment (and in which I had a good bathe); and all three tumble together into the Zaindarud, whose upper courses we were now approaching. Descending into a valley called that of the Bloody Spring (*Chashma-i-Khuni*), where was little pasture but wide spaces of white anemones, and exchanging a few words with some men and women who were putting their tents on their cattle with a view to migration, we crossed the infant river and marched up stream. From a white tent on the other bank a rider came over with an invitation to come and rest in the shade and enjoy a qalyan. We did so; carpets were spread for us, and I did my best to satisfy the curiosity of our entertainers (they were some of the chief men of the tribe hereabouts) concerning Europe and its inhabitants. Of course they asked me whether England or Russia would win if they fought. I fell back on Prince Bismarck's

comparison of such a war to a fight between a dog and a fish. This excited great wonder and applause. It was only a mile from this place to our own quarters. A white tent and two black tents had been pitched for us in a little meadow beside the stream. The Zaindarud is here about ten yards broad, cold, and clear. On its farther side were water meadows and fields of wheat. Groups of black tents besprinkled the valley; a mountain a thousand feet high closed its upper end, and shut out Zarda Kuh from sight.

Our Khan was now in his own country, being brother of the kadkhuda of the black tents around us. After breakfast he assembled the heads of families and brought them to look at the stranger. They sat in a circle, and we conversed for some time. Then, after a bathe in the Zaindarud, I went up the hill at the end of the valley, to see the famous place called Kârkunân, or The Workers. It is a huge cleft, which has been quarried in the brow of the hill; in length 300 yards, in breadth fifteen, and fifty feet deep. The crest of the hill has been cloven across. This work, began by Shah Abbas the Great in the beginning of last century, was carried on by his successors until

the downfall of the Safavi dynasty. Others, however, say that the work was discontinued because the workmen came upon a vein of flint which they could not get through. The rock is freestone above and flint below. On the top of the hill the quarried stones are symmetrically piled, and all the upper part of its face is covered with chippings. Ruins of stone houses built for the workmen or their overseers are still standing. The work conveys a sense of greatness even in its unfinished condition, but had it been completed, it might have ranked beside Persepolis; for the design was nothing less than to cleave the hill to its base and let the Kurand water through to join the Zaindarud, and deliver Isfahan for ever from danger of famine. To tunnel the hill had been far easier, but Shah Abbas was unequal to working in the dark. We looked down upon the Kurand from the summit of the hill. It flows in a narrow valley, higher than that of the Zaindarud; we could just catch a glimpse of its white snow-waters at one point of their deep-cut channel. The valley looked wild and desolate, uneven, uncultivated; and beyond it, at last seen clear of intervening ranges, rose Zarda Kuh, its



peaks and summits one unbroken sheet of snow, while long snow-fields reached down to the dark green of the valley. A great cleft marked a pass, now snowed up and impracticable. At the foot of a snow-field, and scarcely distinguishable from snow, the foaming Kurand broke out of the mountain-side. On the other hand, the valley of the Zaindarud lay bright and smiling in the evening sun; I could see our encampment, the clusters of black tents around, and all the valley as far as Chashma-i-Khuni, with the Zaindarud serpentine down it, formed by the confluence of two blue streams which, issuing from the base of the mountain at points two miles apart, united their waters a little distance above my tent. It was a pleasant summer prospect on the one side, and a dark valley on the other, overlooked by rocks and snow. Some patches of snow were still unmelted on the top of the mountain where we stood. Having long enjoyed the view, I turned and descended. My guide took me to one of the two sources of the Zaindarud, a fine cold spring in a rocky hollow, where we found a woman singing and washing her feet. She laughed when she saw us, and was noways abashed. I called at a

small encampment, where a man wished to sell a horse. He put his own saddle on the animal, and I rode home, feeling very short in the stirrups. My guide seemed rather melancholy after meeting the nymph of the fountain, and finally broke silence and asked me if I was married. "Why don't you take a wife?" he said, on hearing my answer: "a woman is the delight of a man (*zan aish i mard ast*)."

I told him that in our country girls were free to choose their husbands, and a man must wait till he could find a girl who approved of him. This was a custom not at all to the taste of my friend. If he had only money, he said, he could get the prettiest girl in the tribe. Then with a sigh he proceeded to state that he was forty years old, that he had been married five-and-twenty years, that his wife was not so young as she had been, and that he wanted money to buy another. I told him that he ought to be thankful for having enjoyed twenty-five years of "the delight of a man"; but he did not recover his spirits all the rest of the way.

*25th June.*—The following day was spent in visiting the source of the Kurand. Sayyid Ali and I took a guide, a mule, and my pony, and the muleteer with his ass; we climbed up to

Kârkunân, and descended the farther side of the mountain, towards the narrow valley where the streams of the Kurand and Marburra join. The valley lay across our path ; along its nearer side, under the range we were descending, flowed the Marburra; along its farther side flowed the Kurand, under Zarda Kuh. The two rivers came together at a point eight hundred feet below us. In our descent we stopped for a few minutes beside two poor tents on a tiny plateau, picked up an additional guide, and enjoyed the hospitable qalyan. A basket of wild celery stood in a little brook that glided past the tents, and in another basket was sliced *musir*, a bulb which forms the root of a tall white flower like an anemone, and which looks and tastes not unlike a small mild turnip. The brook empties itself into the Marburra ; we followed its course down a little ravine, and reached the river a hundred yards above its junction with the Kurand. It was flowing with a smooth and silent stream, but very swift, hip-deep, and exceedingly cold and clear ; the breadth was thirty yards. The bank on this side was fringed with willows, and immediately above them rose a steep slope of a hundred feet, covered with quarried stones

and splinters. At the junction of the rivers stand the remains of the dam which was to throw the Kurand water into the cleft which Persian monarchs were hewing for it through Kârkunân. There is an island midway between the two streams; on this, and at the mouth of the ravine down which the Kurand comes, are the ruins of two piers, built of unhewn stone, compacted some thirty feet thick, and eight to ten feet in height. The dam does not seem ever to have been completed. The meeting of the waters looks well when viewed from the stone-strewn slope. So deep and narrow is the channel, that even the summits of Zarda Kuh are lost to sight, and the spectator finds himself alone with the three river-vistas—up the Marburra on his right, up the Kurand in the direction which he faces, and down their combined stream on his left. The dark high sides of the river-channels contrast strongly with the bright blue-green of the waters and the deep blue of the sky. The swiftness and silence of the current enhance the strange effect. The combined stream rushes along unfordable; but the Marburra can be crossed fifty yards above the point of junction. I took off my boots, and rode over on the pony, with my feet dangling

in the water. They were benumbed by the time I got across. Next followed Sayyid Ali on the mule. Our guides waded across, waist-deep in the bitterly cold water. There remained the muleteer with his donkey. I doubt if he would have summoned up courage to come over, had not an old man and a lad appeared from the Kurand ravine with a smaller donkey, and calmly proceeded to cross. Their safe arrival on his side left him no excuse, so, with a guide on either hand, he took the water in some anxiety. Sayyid Ali encouraged him with humorous remarks from the safe bank. "Hold on by the ass's ears, man, and you need not fear. Hold on by his ears, and think of Murtiza Ali." The truth was that though the passage could be accomplished without difficulty, yet a single stumble on the round stones of the river-bed might well prove fatal. The swift stream would hurry the fallen beast and its rider past the Kurand mouth before they could recover their footing; and once in the combined stream, the chances of escape would be small. Our guides assured us that the Marburra is unfordable here in the afternoon, when it has received its day's contingent of melted snow. It is called the Marburra because its waters are

so cold that a snake (they say) dies if plunged in them.

We were now on the left bank of the Kurand. It is a smaller stream than the Marburra, and the reason why it gives its name to the combined river is probably the picturesqueness of its source. We marched up stream, along steep banks forty feet above the water, then into a little holm or river-meadow, and again along the top of cliffs sixty feet high. The river was a perpetual pleasure, with its rapid noisy current, breaking in blue sheets over shelving rocks, or boiling in deep pools. After another descent to the level of the stream, where we found some tents and cattle, we cut across a bend, climbed a hill, and came on the river again where it flows under cliffs 120 feet high, from the top of which, between two snow-fields, the source of the Kurand was full in view. It is a lateral slit in the yellow limestone face of Zarda Kuh; the water pours over the edges of this, falls twenty feet into one pool, ten feet into another, and forty feet more into its deep bed. After the first leap, one quarter of the stream turns off to the right, and makes its way round a rocky island to rejoin the main stream. They

say that one of the Persian kings had his tent pitched on the island, and slept there amid the roar of waters all round him. I went round the head of the cliffs and along the side of the mountain as far as the source. At the right-hand end of the slit is a natural shaft in the rock, down which one can look into a deep well, whence the river rises and fills the slit and flows over. In its descent, the water is churned into whiteness; but its colour in the well is a wonderful greenish-blue, shot through with streaks and bubble-points of light, seeming to sink into unfathomable depths. Such are the force and volume of the water which thus finds sudden exit from its prison in the caverns of the mountain, that, standing above and near it, I found myself involuntarily thinking of the roar and fury with which a green sea-wave breaks over a low rock on the Irish coast. It would be vain to try to describe the exhilaration and joyousness of spirits produced by the fresh mountain air, the sound of the water, and the bright colours around—the sparkling blueness of the sky, the blueness of the water, the glittering snow, the bare bold rocks, and the green grass creeping up their bases to the

snow line. On a grassy patch below us stood two tents, and when we returned from watching the water, a pretty bright-eyed girl was cooking our breakfast—bread and jujube porridge, with butter and buttermilk and snow. She baked us excellent bread, and laughed merrily at my attempts to overcome the suspicion of her dog, in which I succeeded so far that he would take bread from my hand if I held it out for five minutes and steadily looked the other way.

The poor people had given us of their best. Jujube halwa was their only sweet dish; sugar they knew not. We talked as best we could (for the Bakhtiari dialect is very different from classical Persian) to an old man who firmly believed himself to have lived a century at least, and said he had seen Shah Fath Ali (who died in 1834) in "the city," meaning, as we supposed, Teheran. But on further inquiry it appeared that the Fath Ali in question was beardless, and therefore could not have been the Shah, who possessed a magnificent beard, and was very proud of it; moreover, the city proved to be the magnificent metropolis of Fârsân, where we had found some difficulty



in procuring a few pounds of rice. Such is the ignorance of these mountaineers, though they are great travellers after their own fashion. The old man pointed out the pass by which, in the end of autumn, his people would march to their summer pastures near Shustar. It was a wild cleft in Zarda Kuh; the rock-walls on either hand must rise many hundred feet, and the bottom was all snow. They cross on the snow in spring, but in autumn it is too soft for the animals, and they have to follow a track along the rocky side of the cleft. The Bakh-tiaris are no contemptible cragsmen. As we ate and looked at Zarda Kuh, we saw a man and two boys pass above the Kurand fountain, at a height where to slip would mean instant death. They walked lightly along, upright, finding foothold in the holes and roughnesses of the hard shelving rock. Above them were 2000 feet of rock and snow, to the summit of the mountain; but higher peaks of Zarda Kuh rose farther up the valley, on our right, dividing the blue air with wedge and spire of snow. From the top of the mountain, they told us, the lowlands could be seen, and Shustar and Dizful. But the ascent was out of the question, unless I moved my camp hither and spent

a day in the enterprise, and this I did not wish to do. So we parted, giving a few krans to our host's little son, and marched across the steep little ridges and declivities of the valley, towards a saddle-back which promised an easier road than Kârkunân. These ridges were bright with juniper bushes and yellow stalks of wild celery, and fragrant with mint and thyme; a fresh wind moved over them, and little springs ran down every hollow. From the edge of the last ridge, we looked down on a broad river-meadow, a semicircle with the high ground as arc and the Marburra as its chord. Black tents stood on the slopes, and their owners hailed us from afar with persevering inquiries about me, to which our guides shouted back, "It's a Farangi, ahoy—hoy—oy—oy," in a long-sustained, high-pitched note, rising and falling like the flight of a wagtail. The river, when we reached it, proved quite formidable. It ran in three channels 150 yards broad, and not more than knee-deep. There was a pretty fair road over the saddle-back. While descending the other side towards home, and admiring the sunny mountain-tops and the green valley threaded by the sinuous Zaindarud, I became aware of a female voice

demanding that I should approach. Some women on good-looking Bakhtiari ponies were riding up the hill, and it was one of them who called me. "Come here," she cried, "that I may see you." I did so, and found her past the age of beauty; but her imperiousness remained. "Who are you," she demanded, "and what is your business?" I told her I was a Farangi, who had come to see the Bakhtiari mountains. "Are you skilled in medicine?" she asked; and being assured that I was not, she turned and rode on without wasting more time over me. Once before, in the Chahar Bagh of Isfahan, a woman had called to me as I was riding about my business. She spoke to me in Turki, asking me whence I had come. I told her I knew no Turki, whereupon she began to speak Persian, but I left her rather than become the centre of a crowd. She was a nomad, with unveiled face, and doubtless had no object in view but the gratification of her feminine curiosity.

It may be worth while to add a few words as to the practicability of turning the Kurand into the Zaindarud. The dam at the junction of the Kurand and the Marburra, if carried as high as the lips of the river-banks, would raise

the water about fifty feet; if carried up to the level of the knolls behind the bank, it would raise the water 100 feet. This would throw the river some little distance up the ravine at the foot of Kârkunân hill, leaving a mile and a half of tunnelling to be done from this point through the hill to the Zaindarud valley. The difference in the height between the Zaindarud and Kurand valleys is probably 300 feet, so that there would be no difficulty in the matter of levels. Shah Abbas, or his successors, seem to have tried to pierce the hill by a qanât, and the old wells can still be seen; but the attempt was given up, and of course a mere qanat would have been quite inadequate. Nobody in his senses would think of renewing the romantic attempt to cleave the hill in twain, but if the Shah of Persia chose to spend money and engage European engineers, there is nothing to prevent them from tunnelling the hill. One result of turning in the Kurand water would be the flooding out of the villages which cluster under the high banks of the Zaindarud in its lower course; but the loss would be more than counterbalanced by the perpetual insurance of Isfahan and its neighbourhood against famine.

On our return from this delightful excursion, which had lasted eight hours, I held a second assembly of Bakhtiari tent-holders. Among other things, I showed them the Shah's diary, written during his visit to Europe in 1873. One of the elders volunteered to read passages from it aloud for the public benefit. I selected the Shah's commendations of England, but he mangled the passage so in reading that it missed fire lamentably. They were somewhat interested in the portraits of the sovereigns of Europe; one man exclaimed, "Ah, the most exalted Emperor (*imperatur i aali*)," when he saw the portrait of the late Emperor of Russia.

26th June, *Dima tents*,  $1\frac{3}{4}$  *farsakh*.—Next morning we marched across the valley, and over a ridge at its northern side, and came down into the valley of Dima. The river winds round the end of the ridge, and enters the valley, having received the Zarin Chashma stream on its way, as also another brook called that of Cham Darra, or the terraced ravine. In the Dima valley its waters are increased by a third branch of the Zaindarud, flowing from a magnificent spring which may be called the main source of the river. It wells up under a low rocky hill, collects in a pool, and then breaks

away in a stream fifty feet broad by three deep, and joins the river at a little distance. Our friend Chiragh Ali's tents were pitched beside the river, a hundred yards above the pool. He gave us a hearty welcome, and provided me with a white tent. Sayyid Ali reminded him that when we met him for the first time on the way to Baba Haidar, he had invited us to visit him at Dima, promising to find us in three things—grass, water, and snow; but there did not seem to be any snow forthcoming. He laughed, and sent a lad to fetch some from the hills above; meanwhile he gave us bread and curds, and a kid. His people came after breakfast and filled my tent, listened to tales about Europe, looked on with curiosity while I showed them my guns and revolver, and asked me various questions of a personal nature. Why had I not a wife, if I could afford to keep one? The only thing that deterred them from marrying was want of cash. Chiragh Ali had five wives, and was negotiating for a sixth;—a young girl of famous beauty. “He ought to take an old wife,” said I, quite unconscious that Chiragh Ali himself was sitting behind me; “he is too old for so young a bride.” “An old woman,” replied Chiragh Ali, “is the death of a man (*mard-ra mikushad*).” I

was somewhat disconcerted, but the old fellow remained in great good-humour. He has ten sons, and he offered me as many of them as I chose to take; they were simply eating his substance. In truth, the vast leisure and idleness of the male Bakhtiari has to be seen in order to be properly appreciated. The women have enough to do with milking and making curds and butter, tending the children, and weaving carpets and tents; but the men lounge about all day, while a few lads watch the flocks on the hill-sides. In the afternoon I went with a large following to the pool, where we drank tea and smoked. They were a queer wild lot, Bakhtiaris and Arabs, the latter talking the rough Arabic of Dizful and the low country. They declared they had never seen gold, so I showed them a ring and the inside of my watch, which was all the gold in my possession. One side of the pool, that over which the water finds an exit, has evidently been faced with stone at some former time; and a stone platform once stood in the centre, but is now half ruined, half submerged. The pool is thirty yards square, and seven feet deep in the centre. It is enclosed by a low stone wall on three sides, and by the rocky

hill on the fourth ; on the hill also are ruins of stone buildings. All this stonework is rude to the last degree ; yet the people, as usual, cherish a tradition of some king unknown, who made his pleasure-place here. The pool abounds with fish. In the middle of our tea-party a pipe was mislaid, and was sought some time in vain. Several of the company suggested that spirits might have taken it away. They used the word *malaika*, meaning angels, instead of *ajinna*, the term commonly used to denote fairies, or malicious spirits.

This was the last of our Bakhtiari encampments. We were now to turn our backs on Zarda Kuh, and march north-eastwards to Teheran, by the way of Gulpaigan and Qum. I was much pleased with what I had seen of the Bakhtiari mountains, with their splendid air, their abundant springs, breezy hill sides, green valleys, and swift streams. Zarda Kuh itself is a magnificent sight. The range extends about thirty miles north-west and south-east, and the highest peaks can hardly rise less than 16,000 feet above the sea level. The extreme whiteness of their snows is enhanced by contrast with the deep and brilliant blue of the Persian sky. I have seen no such skies in Italy.



## CHAPTER V.

## ZARDA KUH TO TEHERAN.

## SEVENTY-FOUR FARSAKHS : SEVENTEEN DAYS.

27th June, Sulaijan, 4 farsakhs; 7.10 a.m. to noon.—We marched three farsakhs along the left bank of the river, past several holms where Arab cattle were pasturing. The Arabs live not in black tents but in square flat-roofed huts of reeds. They seemed poorer even than the Bakhtiari, but their cows and heifers were many. We passed large spaces once covered with the crops of villages, but now open grazing-land. It is said that the Afghans destroyed 333 villages in Zarda Kuh, and the land has remained waste ever since. We left the river and turned up a defile called the *Tang-i-gazin* or pass of tamarisk. The river narrows after passing the mouth of the defile, and flows under high cliffs. It was in this defile that Rustam cut the forked twig of tamarisk which, when shaped into an arrow, put out both the eyes of Afrasiab at once, and gave the victory to the

Persian champion. Crossing the heights, we came down on the river again. I was riding in advance with our Khan. We passed a horseman, armed and alone; some others rode nearer the river, half a mile below. The horseman spoke to me in Persian, asking my nationality and business, and then interchanged a few words in Luri or Bakhtiari with the Khan; who, riding up to me as we passed on, said, "That man was talking nonsense." "What nonsense?" I asked. "He was saying that had I not been safeguarding you, he would have robbed you." I doubted considerably whether this was a correct version of their conversation; and Sayyid Ali, to whom the Khan subsequently narrated the incident, treated the thing as a fiction. We had now to ford the river, being here about sixty yards broad, with a strong stream up to the girths of the little horse I was riding (a Bakhtiari horse bought at Zarda Kuh, the Lahinjan colt being given in part payment). A tribe on the march descended into the water after us. We watched the lively scene from the high bank on the farther side. The children were placed on the asses which bore the tents and household goods, and guided across by women with petticoats lifted to mid-thigh; the men waded with a kid dragging from

each hand by the ears; the sheep and young cattle and goats made their way over between swimming and wading, drifted in a crowd down stream; all the river was full of life, and the air was full of lowings and bleatings and cries of encouragement; all this, with the bright blue of the river, the clearness of the air, and the green mountain-slopes above, made a picture at once vivid and animated. We rode up the bank to a spring, where some women were washing clothes. A black-eyed girl of twelve years, wearing a bright red shawl, showed her white teeth in a smile of greeting. The Khan asked her if she had ever seen a Farangi before. "Do you mean white-hat?" said she (I was wearing a white pith hat of India); "yes, he came to our house the day before yesterday." She was a girl of Sulaijan, and could not have been speaking the truth. A woman washed a cup, and gave it us to drink with. A little farther on, we came upon the village, oddly stuck against the steep side of a bare white hill overlooking a ravine-valley watered by a tiny affluent of the Zaindarud. It has a wall of mud, following the irregularities of the hill-side, and a fort on the top of the hill. It is the first village of Faraidan. The fort was full of Bakhtiaris, congregated to pay revenue to the

kalantar, who was a brother-in-law of our Khan. Their horses were stabled below, and they themselves filled the upper rooms, one of which was nevertheless emptied for me. The kalantar brought me an excellent breakfast, while his people crowded round door and window to see me. In the next room were a party reading the "Shahnama" aloud by turns. That heroic composition tends to become wearisome when listened to for an hour and a half without intermission. Its effect was to lull me to sleep. After dinner I paid our Khan what I considered a handsome reward, and dismissed him. He had however nourished such magnificent expectations, that the sum tendered in no wise satisfied him, and he grew rather discourteous, nor would he acknowledge our farewell greeting, as we marched away next morning. I was sorry for this. The man was by no means a favourable specimen of the khan class in Persia, but he had been our travelling companion through much interesting country; he may, for aught I know, have been really useful as a protector, and I was loth to leave him in the sulks.

*28th June, Jamali, 5 farsakhs; 6.10 a.m. to noon.*—Waking in the small hours, and looking up to the heavens from my bed on the house-

top, my eyes were gratified by their first sight of the comet of 1881. It had then a tail a yard long, and made a goodly spectacle. We renewed our march down the river, riding along some holms of tall rich grass, with excellent wheat and great affluence of vetches and poppies and flowers yellow and blue. Again we turned up a ravine and crossed the heights above the river, and came down on our halting-place, a treeless village with bare brown walls, standing at the end of a road-vista of dazzling white. It was plain enough, to-day, that we had left the high mountain-region, with its green slopes and bountiful springs. The ravine and heights that we crossed were built of grey clay and stone and seamed with dry torrent-beds, recalling the arid salt regions of Lar. After some hunting for a house, we found poor enough quarters with one of the villagers, whose women kindly cleared out a room for me, removing cradle, spinning-wheel, and all their poor household goods which might be in my way. They milked the cow for me in the evening, and their daughters kept the hot sunlight out of my room by filling the central aperture of the roof with their brown faces and bright eyes inquisitively studying the stranger. In the afternoon I

bathed in the river. Jamali is not watered from the Zaindarud, but from a small spring above the village. The river seems to be useless for irrigation in this part of its course. We had passed several hamlets on the opposite bank in to-day's march, all watered from tiny affluents flowing through ravines terraced with crops. I should mention that a letter of apology from the Khan arrived after us in Jamali. Also that the house we lodged in had several subterranean caves, where the cattle are bestowed in the winter, and fed on hay, dried milk-thistles and herbs. The snow lies deep in winter, and cuts off communication between village and village for weeks at a time.

*29th June, Ruzba, 3 farsakhs ; 6 to 9.20 a.m.—*  
We crossed the Zaindarud next morning, and left it for ever. Our last fording of it, before approaching Sulaijan, had been attended by a mishap to one of the mules, which strayed down stream, fell, and lay half an hour with water flowing over its pack, which happened to be my bedding. It was not without some anxiety that we descended into this broader and more rapid ford of Jamali, but the caravan got safely across. Crossing a plateau among rounded hill-tops besprinkled with a scanty

vegetation, we came down on the Ruzba and Châdugân valley. This lies under the Askarân mountains, called here more commonly Dâlân Kuh, and slopes down to the Zaindarud ten miles below. It is broken up by ridges and rounded hills, among which lie a few villages, brightening the grey-green country with emerald crops. Chief of these is the large village of Châdugân, visible at four miles on the right as one rides over the last ridge above Ruzba. At the foot of Dâlân Kuh stand a few hamlets, clear-cut in their treeless grey against the black hill-side; the mountains rise high enough to retain a few patches of snow till the end of June. Ruzba has trees, poplar and willow, more graceful than effectual for shade. It is a village of 200 houses, nestled under a grey hill, from the foot of which a dozen springs break out in a little space, giving abundance of water all the year round. An old mud fort with lower courses of stone stands on a clay knoll and divides the village in two. An imamzada with a dome once blue-tiled stands in the middle of its dedicated fields on a ridge to the east. I found fair quarters in an upper room of the Kadkhuda's house. The people speak Turki and Persian, and are inquisitive and friendly.

In the evening I went out for a bathe, and afterwards ascended the ruins of the fort, and obtained a good view of the valley and its villages. I had seen a notable thing this day, four cattle in one plough; and was to see a notabler thing on the morrow.

30th June, Khonsar, 9 farsakhs; 3.10 a.m. to 2 p.m.—There had been some difficulty in ascertaining the distance of Khonsar from our halting-places of the last three days; but now we were told we could reach it in six or seven hours' march. Mountain farsakhs, I know not why, are longer than those of the plains, and experience had taught us that half a farsakh in these regions meant a full hour of the road. We started early, therefore, hoping to arrive before midday. The road divides itself into four stages. Till sunrise, we marched parallel to Dālān Kuh, looking up at the black mountain-range on our right, and the comet and the stars above it, bright in a moonless sky. This was the night of the comet's maximum brightness; after this it rapidly languished and faded out of the heavens. As morning broke behind the mountains, we crossed the low saddle-back between the end of Dālān Kuh and a brief range on our left. On the farther side we saw



a broad hollow, with three villages,<sup>1</sup> one close on the left of our road, the other two farther back in a bay of the mountains ; a fourth, high on the mountain-side, turned its treeless roofs to the sun. Crossing this hollow, we passed, at three miles on our right, the large village of Dumbana, at the *tail* of Dâlân Kuh (as its name implies), the north-western end of the range. It has a few trees, but mostly stands naked, literally *picturesque*, in that clear air which lends no softness to outline or shadow. The third stage of the road was the ascent of Khonsar pass. We saw one more village on our left near the foot of the pass, and a small fort stood half-way up, tenantless since the drought of 1879. On the top we found a welcome spring of cold water. We had now been eight hours on the road, and the descent to Khonsar lasted nearly three hours more. The road winds so among ravines and round hill-sides that Khonsar does not come into view till one is within a little distance of it. My delight was great at seeing four miles of unbroken foliage, filling a long hollow and hiding the houses of the town. Sayyid Ali had ridden on and seen

<sup>1</sup> One of these, Dârun, used to be the residence of the Governor of Faraidan, but he lives now in Châdugân.

the governor, who assigned us excellent quarters in a large three-storied house, and sent us a sheep. It had been a hot march, though we were within a few hundred yards of snow on the summit of the pass. At dawn we had seen antelopes with their fawns returning to Dâlân Kuh after feeding in the fields of the villages below by night. A more extraordinary spectacle was reserved for us at the foot of the Khonsar pass, namely, a cart; and we met a couple more higher up. I did not think there was such an article out of Teheran. Why they should be used here, while Isfahan has none of them, I cannot divine; but there they were, in the likeness of the familiar bullock-cart of Hindustan, but heavier built and broader, with small solid wheels, iron-bound. There were four oxen to a cart. In this part of the road we met also our former friend the gigantic whistling cockroach, green and black. A smaller species flies violently in a straight line, making soprano melody all the way.

*1st and 2nd July, Halt at Khonsar.*—In Khonsar I spent two days. The governor called upon me, also a Khan in the Zill-us-Sultan's service. Since Khonsar was attached to the Isfahan government, two years ago, the

Zill-us-Sultan has ordered poppy to be cultivated; but it has made no great progress as yet. I went out to see the tanks above the village, which are the source of the Khonsar river. They are three springs, paved and walled with stone, but one was dry and another nearly dry; the third had cool and crystal-clear water waist-deep. Riding down the village, along the stream, which flows twenty feet broad and a foot deep, turning mill-wheels and breaking over little dams raised to throw the water into channels that irrigate the terrace-fields and the orchards, one passes under the shade of innumerable walnut-trees, of willow and poplar, apple, pear, and plum-trees, with mulberries here and there, and long trellises of vines. And this lasts for five miles at least. I was especially delighted with a waterfall where the shade was thickest. Fields of clover above the banks gave good grazing to the mules. It was a pity to see how recklessly the stream was defiled in its lower course. The swift water flowed on unsullied, but to walk along its banks was hardly possible. Khonsar ought to have a population of five thousand, but perhaps it has not half that number now. Last year's drought tried it severely; the stream ran dry, and 1400

people died or migrated. Moreover, the upper and lower halves of the town have been at feud for years, and the remedies enjoined by the Shah, who called the chief men to Teheran five years ago, and required them to support twenty-five mounted soldiers in Khonsar, have tended to impoverish the town still farther. I saw many excellent houses of two and three stories deserted and falling to ruin. But the natural beauty of the place is full of attractiveness still. From my bed on the roof, I could look up to the steep mountain-side overhanging the village, and count its yet unmelted patches of snow. The interior of my sitting-room was decorated with quotations from the Koran, painted on the roof. One passage began, *And slay the unbelievers*; I could not make out the rest. On the wall hung a lithographed picture of some historical massacre of unarmed and priestly individuals; the foreground was filled with a row of doctors of the law, robed and turbaned, seated with their backs to the beholder, and labelled *Spectators (ahl i tamasha)*, as if a massacre were a favourite form of social entertainment. Rude paintings of the Prophet riding on the Burâq adorned other parts of the wall. Residence in a Mussalman country tends to

give a European an almost Lucretian horror and hatred of religion, as it is exemplified around him. Nevertheless, the people were friendly enough. Our host sent his own son with us, on a pretty filly, which the lad rode without a saddle.

*3rd July, Gulpaigan, 4 farsakhs; 1.45 to 7.15 a.m.*—Sayyid Ali had written to inform the governor of Gulpaigan of our coming. Unfortunately, we were delayed a day longer, and had the mortification to learn, when we did arrive, that the Vizier with an escort had taken the trouble to march out five miles to meet me, and had to return disappointed in the heat of the day. As for the march, we went along the right bank of the Khonsar stream, crossed it by a good stone bridge of a single arch, and from the ridge on the opposite side we looked down on the plain of Gulpaigan, well filled with villages and trees, but whitening with salt efflorescence towards its northern end. The town looked large and imposing as we drew near to its wall and wind-towers. An escort met us near the gate; we were conducted to the governor's house, where a cool and spacious room awaited me, and an excellent breakfast, with light white wine. The governor is the

son of Bahram Mirza, Muizz ud Daulat, who is a brother of the Mutamid. He has held high appointments, and feels himself to a certain extent shelved as governor of a small country town like Gulpaigan. He solaces himself with gardening, and has raised good store of beans, potatoes, lettuces, and cucumbers, all of which he showed to me with pride, and gave me plenty for dinner. In the evening, we sat in the courtyard under the apricot trees, ate fruit, and talked. The Shahzada showed me some specimens of his calligraphy, and gave me his photograph. Talking of the political position of Persia, he said, "We have no understanding with Russia, but we are afraid of her (*ma bâ Rus namisâzîm, lekin az Rus mi tarsim*).'' While we were talking and smoking, two Armenian priests came with a letter, stating their business with certain Armenian villages of Kămără, a district attached to Gulpaigan. The Shahzada received them courteously, ascertained that they had quarters in the town, and said he would assist them to the utmost of his power (*har cha mikhwahid, man hazir hastam*).

*4th July, Halt at Gulpaigan.*—On the morning after our arrival, I went out to see a public work executed by a monarch whose name will

live in romance long after it has died out of history. It seemed strange to hear the name of Hârûn ar Rashid in a petty Persian town; but the great Caliph has left a lasting memorial of himself in an aqueduct which he scooped out along the rocky hill-side, to bring water to Gulpaigan from a spring ten miles away. A bright green line of sedge marks the course of the channel athwart the brown stony slopes, and it holds a strong stream of sweet water, four feet deep by seven broad. Gulpaigan may have had 10,000 inhabitants, but the late famine has laid half of it in ruins, and a ride through the streets is not so cheerful as it might be. Everywhere are broken mud walls, empty compounds, ruined gardens. Yet the situation is good—a plain at the foot of an amphitheatre of hills—the climate excellent, and wood and water and fertile soil are not wanting. The outskirts of the town have lanes prettily shaded with mulberry and willow, and bordered by watercourses. The barley was ripe when we came, the wheat nearly so. Poppy fields were numerous and flourishing.

*5th July, Qaidu, 4 farsakhs; 5.25 to 10 a.m.*  
—As there were rumours of robbers between this place and Qum, we took with us four mounted ghulams. The river which feeds

Harun ar Rashid's aqueduct joins another coming from the north-east, and both together flow in a northerly direction into the plain of Kāmārā, whither we also were bound. The north-eastern end of the Gulpaigan plain is thick with villages and trees and pigeon-towers; the nominal number of villages in the plain is sixty-six. Passing by these populous parts, we entered the river-defile, barren with black rocks, and having crossed the stream twice, ascended the rocky heights on the right bank by a bad and broken road, and then descended by rounded hill-tops and ridges till we came in sight of the plain of Kamara. It was all a pale yellow (wheat or barley) or a pale green (clover), upon which the solid grey of the villages and the heavy green of their trees stood in well-marked contrast, like colours laid on canvas by the painter's skill. This sort of picturesqueness is indeed a characteristic of all Persian landscapes which do not overtask the sight by the vast uniformity of their extent. Two channels taken off in the defile water a part of the plain, while the north-western portion has water from a river of its own. All these streams are slightly brackish; the combined river finds its way to Qum, gathering brackishness as it goes along. We halted at a small village called Qaidu, where the governor of Kamara lives. He is a



Shahzada, one of the numerous grandsons of Fath Ali Shah. The Shahzada's possessions are a ruinous mud house, parts of a dead donkey, two hens, and a cat—the latter supported by theft. Nevertheless, he reproached me in a dignified manner for having neglected to give him notice, so that he might come out to meet me with due pomp and ceremony; and the way in which he did the honours of his crazy mansion was at once ludicrous and pitiful. For my particular part, I was well content with him; but the necessities of his position, want of the world's gear, and long unacquaintance with better manners, had taught this small prince (he was a quaint little man of four feet six, and had been thirty-two years in Kamara) various subtle devices for making money, which proved too much for Sayyid Ali's patience. In the evening, I went out and bathed in a pool of the river, came back and invited the Shahzada to a cup of tea on the house-top, then had dinner, and prepared to retire for the night. But I had hardly lain down, when a shrill clamour arose in the street below. I thought it was the usual wrangling over the price of fowls and barley; but no, it seemed to be "something far more deeply interfused," in-

volving half the village. Turning out, I found Sayyid Ali indignant, and a crowd outside the door, which he said had been summoned by the Shahzada to give him and my servants a beating. Obviously so extreme a measure would never have been adopted without cause; and after some inquiry I got to the truth of the matter. An altercation over the furnishing of certain tufangchis (the robbers had by this time increased to two bands of thirty and forty men, hovering in the immediate vicinity) had developed into a lively interchange of personal abuse between the Prince and Sayyid Ali, in which the advantage lay decidedly with the former, till at last my man, exasperated beyond measure at some injurious and sarcastic reflections on his claim to be a Sayyid, lent the small scion of royalty a sound box on the ear. He retreated and called out his forces, male and female; and it was the latter who had assumed so truly formidable an aspect when I appeared on the scene. Some fifty maids and matrons were besieging the door, clamouring for vengeance on the unbelieving Farangi and his Jew of an attendant. Some of my servants who had tried to play the peacemaker had come back with blows and scratches; and on the whole it

seemed time for the *vir pietate gravis* to come forth and allay the tempest. Unfortunately, I possessed no such experience of the fair sex in general as could qualify me to meet such a conjuncture; but being conscious of rectitude, and having read in books that the female bosom is eminently susceptible of sympathetic and generous emotions, I thought that the spectacle of defenceless innocence and integrity might move them somewhat, and therefore advanced deferentially, hat in hand. Whereupon they all incontinently fled. Much relieved by this unlooked-for deliverance, I addressed myself to the male portion of the population, who were sulkily gathered around their governor at the other end of the village. I found the Shahzada sitting sadly on the ground, holding his hand to his injured cheek. I really pitied the poor little man, insulted thus in the centre of his jurisdiction, and hastened to empty vials of balm over him, all the apologies and compliments I could think of. He and his people gradually thawed, I reconducted the Shahzada to Sayyid Ali, saw the recruiting of tufangchis satisfactorily started, and went to bed again. Next morning I learned that the affair as between the principal parties had

ended in a grand and touching reconciliation and mutual confession of faults; the Shahzada and Sayyid Ali embraced and kissed, and smoked the pipe of peace over a pillau.

*6th July, Mahallat, 5 farsakhs; 5 to 10.40 a.m.*—From the top of the Khonsar pass we had cast a last backward glance on the snowy summits of the Kuh-i-Rang, close to Zarda Kuh and almost emulating it in height; the mountains of Faraidan (Kuh-i-Mashhad) could also be seen, nearer us and darker, yet snow-streaked on their precipitous northern face. But now we were below the mountain region, bound to follow a warm and brackish stream into Qum, low-lying near the western border of the Great Kavir. We set out next morning with our four ghulams and five tufangchis, crossed the end of the Kamara plain, and followed the river through a black defile not specially noteworthy, till it emerged with us on a long arid valley, with bays running up into stony hills ten miles on the right, and a dark and tortuous line marking the deep-worn channel of the river down its centre, with yellow patches of ripe wheat here and there; but beyond and above, on the left hand, under a high mountain-brow, the fields and orchards

of Mahallat covered four square miles with verdure. We found quarters in the Governor's house. I preferred sitting in the courtyard, under the shade of a noble plane-tree and a mulberry-tree, beside a stream of pure cold water that ran through a little tank. I had seen something of the beauty of Mahallat as we rode up the village in quest of a house; but in the afternoon I went through the whole village, and came back charmed. Mahallat is watered by a spring that wells up from the foot of the cliff, and sends fifty little channels down the streets and lanes and through the houses, here turning a mill, there watering a garden, now disappearing under a wall, to course through a series of rooms, whose half-opened doors show the sparkle of water in the gloom, and then appearing again, dashing across the road, or lining the wayside with laughing waterfalls. The lanes are bordered and often quite overshadowed by trees, giving the prettiest vistas, while the open spaces have tanks of water under magnificent plane-trees. The richness and beauty of the foliage make one pause, and look, and try to disentangle the many-leaved labyrinth overhead, where vines hang from the poplar stems, and apple and

walnut, pomegranate, mulberry, plane and willow, plum-trees and cherry-trees, fig and apricot, mingle their boughs and offer their fruits indiscriminately. The upper and lower parts of the village are separated by a space which, when I saw it, was under yellow crops and green clover, shining in the happy light of evening. A little farther on, one could look under thick-leaved walnut boughs forth on the eastern side of the dreary valley below, still shimmering with the day's heat, and on the long dry bays among the red hills. That was all aridity and barrenness and heat; but I was standing beside cool mountain-springs, under fruitful shade. But it is vain to try to convey the charm of a Persian mountain-village to one who has never marched over a Persian plain. I went up to the source of the stream, and bathed there; it is a pool faced and floored with stone, near an avenue of stately planes. The spring rises at the foot of the solid rock. On my way back, I stopped to admire a branch of mulberries; the owner begged me to wait a minute, went into his house, and returned with a bowl full of mulberries for my eating. The people of Mahallat are very fair, especially the children, who might compare with rosy-cheeked

children of England. One noticeable and pleasing quality in Persian children is their fearlessness. I lost my way once, outside Julfa, and could find nobody to ask but a little fellow who was scoring poppy-heads in a field. He came at once when I called him, and described my road. Seeing that I was still in doubt, he said he could not leave his work, but would get one of his playmates to go with me; and accordingly he produced a small boy of eight or nine, who walked cheerfully before me, giving me suitable admonition from time to time, and evidently regarding me as under his special protection, till he conducted me fairly to the gate of Julfa; and then bade me *Khuda hâfiz*—God be your keeper—and turned to go without hinting at any expectation of reward; but I detained him and gave him two krans, one for himself and one for his comrade of the poppy field, exacting a solemn promise that he would duly deliver the same. Here in Mahallat I saw a pretty boy of four or five years dabbling in a pool under a little spout, and crooning to himself with delight. I came softly behind him, and dropped a pebble before his nose, and then another and another. At the third pebble he looked up, and seeing the

stranger, gravely bade me welcome to his pool and its treasures with a smiling *Salaam alaikum*. Nearing home, we passed through a meadow with a famous cold spring. Some men were resting there with baskets of apricots. They immediately offered me as many as I could eat; but I had had plenty of fruit already. Returning, I talked with the governor, and with a couple of men who had been to Bombay. Mahallat is intimately connected with Bombay through Agha Khan. This notable man was a native of Mahallat, and being driven from Persia for political reasons, lived many years in Bombay on what wealth he had saved, and on a pension from the Indian Government. Besides his political following, he acquired a large train of disciples by his reputation for religion. The men I spoke with had been in his service. One had spent twenty-five years in India, and had visited Allahabad and Meerut. Agha Khan's spacious courtyards now lie desolate and in ruins, and his village is held by the Izzat ud Daulat, wife of the brother of the late Prime Minister, Mirza Husain Khan. One of the Indian travellers had brought back with him from Bombay, among other books, a small copy of that charming old-fashioned nursery-



book, "Evenings at Home." I need not say with what pleasure I read again the wild and wondrous tale of the "Transmigrations of Indur" (that pious "Brachman"), "Eyes and No Eyes," and the instructive "Conversation on Emblems."

Finally, I ought to mention that I met in Mahallat with a man who had made the pilgrimage to Mecca, *viâ* Trebizond, Constantinople, and Egypt. He said the three noteworthy experiences of his travel were the climate of Syria, the city of Constantinople, and the productiveness of Egypt. I asked him whether he thought the Turkish provinces or Persia the better governed. "What country," he asked, "is not better governed than Persia?" But he did not ascribe any fault to the Shah personally.

*7th July, Khurha, 4 farsakhs; 5.45 to 10.30 a.m.*—Our next march began by crossing the mountain ridge above Mahallat by a small steep kotal; then we descended through a valley widening into rounded hills, and finally crossed a low saddle-back, and came down on Khurha. From the top of the kotal we looked back on Mahallat and a few hamlets lower down the slope, and one village fort bisecting a line of green on the river-bank in the bottom of the valley. Beyond that were saw-ridges

and stony slopes. From the saddle-back we had a pretty view of Khurha embosomed in its orchards, while to the left, at the head of a long bay running up into the jagged hills, a wide area of green marked the village of Vār, with a few tiny hamlets like emeralds set in crannies of the rocks behind. The foot of the kotal, on the farther side, was covered with lovely flowers, tall spires of yellow bells, called cow's tail (*gaodumba*) hereabouts; and the dry valley was beautified by a species of flying cricket, which afforded endless matter of speculation. These insects rose and flew from under one's horse's hoofs at every twenty or thirty yards, and no two of them unfolded wings of the same colour. You might take your choice of violet wings, or white with purple spots, or yellow, orange, or red, blue, or deep crimson. Other natural products of this region were wild sheep. We had a gallop after four of them, but they soon left us behind. An hour later, my four ghulams began galloping again. I thought some more sheep had been sighted; but it appeared that somebody had seen robbers, horsemen and footmen, with the eye of imagination. My telescope, however, revealed nothing, and the alarm passed off in half an

hour. It was indeed improbable that any band of thieves would meddle with a European protected by four well-appointed ghulams. The chief of my escort was a man with features that seemed to have been carved out of wood. Exposure to all weathers had burnt him to a deep mahogany hue. Riding up to me as we were leaving Mahallat, he asked me what I thought of the women of that village. I said I knew nothing of the women, but that if one might judge by the children, they must be both pretty and fair. "Ah yes, sir," said he, "they are pretty, very pretty; and then they are so kind,"—this with a marvellous leer wrinkling his mahogany countenance. "They are very kind," he repeated, in a tone of regret. But I think it is only fair to Persian women, whose household ministrations I have more than once had reason to remember gratefully, that I should record my disbelief in idle reports of this sort. In six months' travel through the country, I never saw anything but modesty in any woman's demeanour. The wooden-faced ghulam went on to ask me what I thought of Persia as a power among nations. "If we had other rulers than the Qajars,"<sup>2</sup> he said,

<sup>2</sup> The present royal family. They date from 1794 only.

"Persia has such warriors as not all the world besides can show. The soldiers of other nations march and fight in the plain, but we are stopped by nothing; if we meet a mountain we gallop up it, and we fire and reload at full gallop." He added, that he hoped he had not hurt my national pride by this picture of Persia as a world-conqueror. I asked him what quarrel he had with the Qajars. "Oh," he said, "they don't give any one employment (*nân ba kasi na midihand*), and they despoil the wealthy." Then he wanted to know whether we English paid tribute to Russia. Europe was divided, as he believed, into two parts, Farang and Rus, whereof the former was tributary to the latter. China was included in Farang. As we drew near to Khurha, we passed two stone pillars with capitals that seemed Ionic. I visited them in the afternoon. They were part of a colonnade or roofed building supported on pillars. The people say there used to be fourteen pair; their height is about twenty-five feet, and they are composed of cylinders of stone some four feet long. The stone seemed to be a hard kind of limestone. The capitals are not Ionic, but adorned on two sides with horizontal dice boxes of stone, or

rolls tied tightly in the middle. Remains of a fort of unhewn stone stand close by. As usual, the people were as ignorant as myself of the history of these relics; but it seemed to be a fact that the Shah had encamped here some twelve years ago, had overset a number of the pillars, and had broken up the stone flooring of the colonnade, in the vain hope of finding treasure.

A few of the young men of Khurha had passed through the regiments drilled by Austrian officers in Teheran. They performed the manual exercise with sticks for my edification, and uttered sounds supposed to represent Austrian words of command. They asked me to speak in German, that they might hear. After listening to the first verse of the Prague student's song, one of the crew gravely remarked, "That's abusive (*fuhsh midihad*)."

A prodigy of learning, son of the old man in whose house I was staying, let me have no peace till I had written out the English alphabet for him, both capitals and small letters. After dark, a woman with her baby came on the roof where I had spread my bedding for rest till midnight. I rose and made room for her, drawing my blankets nearer the wall; she unrolled hers, gave me a

drink of water, and lay down to sleep with the child.

7th—8th July, *Dâghânak*, 9 *farsakhs*; 11.30 *p.m.* to 11 *a.m.*—They called it seven *farsakhs* to *Dâghânak*, but I think it is nearer ten. We took *tufangchis* as far as *Daulatabad* ( $3\frac{1}{2}$  *farsakhs*), where we rejoined the river, after marching down a long stony plain with low hills on either hand. Our course seemed to be towards the pole star; the moon set at a quarter to two, and the feeble comet did not last much longer. *Daulatabad* is a mere village-fort with a few fields. It draws its water from the river. *Khurha* is watered by a *qanat*. As we journeyed over the plain hollow sounds were wafted to us from afar, and gradually drew nearer, till the head of a long caravan of camels emerged from the darkness, obliquely crossing our path. They were bound north-westwards for *Zinjan*, two hundred camels in all, I suppose, each with its big deep-booming bell. By six o'clock we were opposite *Naizar*, a village on the right bank of the river, with some walnut-trees and a large area of crops. On our side also, a mile to our left, was a small hamlet with a *qanat*, while a deserted fort stood between us and the river. A young

fellow on horseback came down from the hamlet and asked a few questions. Thence we entered a defile cut by the river, and crossed it by a stone bridge. The bed of the river here is grey limestone rock, cut into fantastic shapes by the action of the water. From the high-pitched crown of the bridge (which is destitute of any parapet) one looks down on the river sleeping in deep green pools twenty feet below. The defile has by this time opened into a narrow valley, with high ridges on either hand; it is a weird and desolate scene. We crossed the ridge on the right, and again descended on the river, passing two village-forts, and the village of Qalaa-i-Cham, well shaded with sinjad-trees. On the left is the river, hidden in a deep channel under black cliffs, which gleam here and there with salt. On riding to the edge of the deep river-valley, one looks down on emerald patches of wheat, looking all the greener and fresher for the blackness and salt above them. On the right, the stony plain stretches away towards a saw-line of "short, sharp, broken hills, like an old lion's cheek-teeth"—the familiar Persian landscape, with a desolate and visionary charm of its own. After this a second ascent begins. Midway up the slope, we looked

across the river, now far below us, to a plateau high on the farther side, in the middle of which stood the village of Zawâriyân. It stood out as a patch of green upon the dull red of the plateau, backed by dull red saw-ridges washed bare by torrents—as notable a piece of colour as I have seen in Persia, and a testimony to the unwearying diligence of man in reclaiming a habitation for himself even out of the stony desert. At the top of the pass we fell in with a party of pilgrims returning from Qum. They gave us a qalyan, and one man addressed me in Urdu; he was from Mahallat. From the summit, we looked down on the plain of Dâghânak, with three villages successively coming into view. It was a long descent to our halting-place. Sayyid Ali rode on before. I watched him afar down the long white descent of the shelterless sunbaked road, on which man and horse moved like one dark speck, till he disappeared in the fringe of fig-trees round the village. When I arrived he said, “To-day you are God’s guest. I have looked through all the village, and found no house fit for your lodging but the house of God;” and accordingly he conducted me to the mosque, the interior of which was a room some thirty feet long by sixteen wide, and about ten feet high; cool



and clean, with grass matting on the floor. Two or three of the chief men of the village stood at the door; I asked leave to enter, and pulled off my boots. "Look," said one of them to Sayyid Ali, "he is putting his hat in the pulpit." "The hat," said Sayyid Ali gravely, "is the most respectable article of dress among the Farangis; and it is placed there as a mark of honour to the pulpit." Sayyid Ali himself found shelter with a small shopkeeper next door. I made a hearty breakfast on poached eggs, bread, and buttermilk, and lay down to sleep on the cool floor, leaving the doors open to admit the wind. The air was hot enough, but not weakening or oppressive. Towards evening it grew quite cool, and I went out to bathe in the river, in a brackish pool chin-deep. Dâghânak has large orchards of figs and pomegranates, but lies below the level of walnut-trees. Its people are the descendants of Turkomans, whom Nadir Shah marched to this place from the Astrabad district a century and a half ago. They talk a corrupted Turki and rough Persian. They seemed to me to preserve some traces of their origin in a certain rudeness or simplicity of demeanour; but they were perfectly civil, and very good-naturedly endured a scolding from Sayyid Ali for disturbing me in

the night with their wranglings over the distribution of water from a channel that ran hard by the mosque. The black tents of some nomad Turks or Bakhtiaris had been seen by us near Naizar. In the evening, as usual, I had a cup of tea and a qalyan with Sayyid Ali, and then proceeded to eat my dinner on the platform for prayer before the mosque. I was half ashamed to find myself drinking wine (the last bottle of a present from the Shahzada of Gulpaigan) under the shadow of the mosque; but I did not reflect that I was also hindering all the devout Mussalmans of Dâghânak from their prayers. I do not know when I enjoyed a dinner more, or was more pleasantly conscious of the glory shed over all things by wine that maketh glad the heart of man. The night was beautifully cool.

*9th July, Qum, 3 farsakhs; 3.30 to 7.30 a.m.*—Next morning we marched into Qum. The road runs parallel to the river, which is on the left hand; traverses a brown stony plain, with patches of cultivation, and empty forts along the river; crosses a very low ridge, and comes down on Qum at three miles further. The gilded dome of Fatima's shrine shone bright in the morning sun. We crossed the river by a good stone bridge, and saw a row of good

houses with balconies on the farther side, more like civilized dwellings than anything we had seen since leaving Isfahan. I went to the telegraph office, and was hospitably entertained by the English officer in charge.

*10th July, Halt at Qum.*—In Qum I halted one day. The city and its shrine have been described by many travellers. What struck me somewhat unpleasantly was a certain air of bigotry. No place in Persia left on me such a profound impression of loneliness and melancholy as Qum, though a populous and flourishing city. The gold-sheathed dome is the symbol of exclusiveness and religiosity, and of all the sombre conventionalities which fetter the dreary East. Qum is a stronghold of superstition. The solitary telegraph officer who lives in the city is an object of unwilling toleration and secret abhorrence to a large class of the population. Yet my host told me he had nothing to complain of, and that his time passed pleasantly enough between work and coursing, and the reading of Persian. He took me over his hunting-ground in the evening, and to the top of a hill crowned with a hermit's cell. The view around would have served Doré well in illustrating Dante's Inferno. The plain and city of Qum were shrouded in a haze

of heat and dust, blown up by the hot winds that had been moaning fitfully through the day. All the rest was a dolorous region of salt hills, twisted and tortured into strange cones and rhombs and angularities, their sides clothed with pale colours, green and grey, red and faint purple, and their bases merging in a sea of ridges and ravines, where the winter rains scour down salt, and the dry watercourses are lined with white salt crystals. In the sultry windless twilight the prospect looks as weird and unhappy as one would desire. We also visited the ruins of the old telegraph office close by the river. It was swept away by a flood in May. The water came down like a wall, and my host had time only to rush to the stable and save his horse. All his other goods perished under the falling walls. At present the river was dry, exhausted by irrigation; but the bed is seventy yards broad. It is a river that nobody can think of with satisfaction. I had tracked it from its source, and all the way had been one succession of black defiles and stony plains; the water is brackish from the beginning, and if any portion escapes Qum it only wanders on to the Great Kavîr, and contributes to the saltiness of the same. It has no name that I could discover. It might serve for one

of the rivers of the infernal regions. The heat in Qum was 94° F. in the daytime, but the nights were deliciously cool. My host drank only water, and that brackish, but in three years he had lost the power of distinguishing its brackishness. He told me that some of the religious dignitaries of Qum were good friends of his, and had in fact asked him twice to become a Mussalman. In theological argument, however, he had the advantage over them, as he was able to apply the principle, *By their fruits ye shall know them*, to the relative merits of Islam and Christianity, as judged by the conduct and worldly position of their respective professors. I was rather struck by what an old woman said to him one evening in my hearing. She was his next door neighbour, and as we returned from our ride she came out and begged him to tie up his dogs (he had a number of dogs, including one Bakhtiari animal of great courage, not to say ferocity), as she was afraid of their biting her grandchildren. "In no religion," she said, "is it approved that innocent children should suffer." My host answered that the fault lay with his Mussalman servants, who neglected his strict orders to keep the dogs in the house. "Then," she said, "if our religion is not able to teach your servants charity, your

religion is better, and I implore you, for God's sake, to keep the dogs indoors." Altogether, Qum is a place where one sees plenty of religion, such as it is. No Jews or Gabrs could live here; and no unbeliever of any sort ever lived permanently in the holy town until our telegraph-station was established there. They say that the devil used to be fond of sleeping on the site of the future city, but one day the angel Gabriel, flying on some heavenly errand, espied the sleeping fiend, and sent him about his business with an imperious *Qum*, Stand up! For a more modern miracle, Imam Riza comes from his tomb in Mashhad every Friday to visit his sister Fatima here. Sayyid Ali entered into a negotiation with the chief guardians of the shrine, which resulted in an offer from the latter to admit me to its sanctities for five tomans. Considering this an excessive sum, I declined the proposal with thanks. One cheerful feature of Qum is the extent of its graveyards. Every open space is a graveyard, studded over with stones marking the last resting-place of pilgrims who have come, *after decease*, to lie in the holy shadow of Fatima's dome. On the march to Pul-i-Dallâk I passed plenty of these defunct worthies, swathed in black cloth between two long slabs of wood,

and loaded up on mules and donkeys, three or four a side. The long stiff corpses swing symmetrically at every step of the slow beasts. In the low pass above Pul-i-Dallâk, I had to press past a whole string of them. This needs good steering, or you will find the head or the feet of a dead Mussalman thrust suddenly into the pit of your stomach.

11th July, *Sadrabad*, 6 *farsakhs* ; 4.10 a.m. to noon.—Let this suffice for Qum. We were now on the high road to Teheran, which is as well known as any road in the world. At Pul-i-Dallâk I found both post-house and caravansarai filled with princes and princesses, returning after having escorted a defunct dowager to Qum. Accordingly I went on to *Sadrabad*, six miles further, and was rewarded for so doing by a grand view of the kavîr from the summit of a low range of black hills. The view disclosed itself suddenly, as I reached the crest of the pass. The kavîr lay at my feet, a white strip of level salt and clay, running east and west as far as one can see, but broadening vastly eastwards, till its boundaries were lost in a mist of plain and sky. It was likeliest to a great stretch of white sand left dry by the tide, but no sand ever glittered with the intense whiteness of this salt-strewn plain.

I had seen and crossed kavirs in Sirjan, in Bafk, and below Isfahan, and I knew that this piece of kavir lay across the high road; yet it broke upon my view with as much of novelty and mystery as if it were the first I had seen. Eastwards lay the great salt desert, and thither I turned an involuntary glance, half expectant of sails on the main tide of the sea which had left this inlet dry. Sadrabad caravansarai was the only sign of man in the whole prospect; it stood like a lighthouse on the beach, and helped to enhance the illusion and the loneliness. The caravan was far behind; I had the whole prospect to myself. The day we spent in the caravansarai was decidedly hot, but with a different heat from that of India, less oppressive, and less exhausting. We marched across the kavir by night. Bright moonlight overhead, and white salt under foot, perfect flatness and complete emptiness, combined to produce an indescribable effect. I rode on alone. A strange hollow whistle came upon the silence and died off, more than once; I know not what it was.

12th July, *Hauz-i-Sultan*, 5 farsakhs; 12 p.m. to 6 a.m.—The water of the abambar at Sadrabad was fair enough, so long as one did not dip deep, and stir the black mud at the bottom; and the room over the gateway of the



caravansarai furnished as good summer quarters as man could desire. The Hauz-i-Sultan caravansarai is on a larger scale, with an apartment of two rooms, and a courtyard for travelers of distinction. I arrived an hour in advance of the mules, went to the post-house, and lay down to sleep on the roof, wrapped in an old blanket. At dawn I moved into the caravansarai, which presented a lively scene, being full of mules, horses, and asses, with their owners male and female, some saddling for departure, others just arriving with loud jangle of bells, and all in bustle and motion. We found our apartment very comfortable, but the water of the abambars was stinking, and unfit to drink. I spied a village-fort with a nursery orchard a quarter of a mile west of the caravansarai, and proposed to send thither and draw from its qanat; but on inquiry it appeared that the fort was tenantless, and that the qanat discharged into a dam five farsakhs away in the hills, whence the water was turned on only when a sufficiency had accumulated, consequently the nursery was quite dry at present: and in fact the qanat itself gave no greater volume of water than the spout of a kettle. I mixed the abambar water with whisky, and drank it as a duty. I do not know whether the view from

the roof of Hauz-i-Sultan caravansarai or that from Sadrabad is the more desolate. There is more salt in the latter, to be sure. I should have mentioned that in Qum bazar I saw cakes of salt brought from a salt mountain eight miles to the south-west. My host had been to the top of it twice, but nobody in Qum believed that, seeing that the mountain was well known to be enchanted, to have a talisman whose virtuous power prevented any one who reached the top from ever getting down again.

12th—13th July, *Shah Abdul Azim*, 12 *far-sakhs*; 9.30 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.—After dinner I had my horse saddled, and rode on, leaving the caravan to follow at ten o'clock. These night marches are a strange experience in their way. They begin with great zeal for pushing on fast, and reaching the *manzil* by dawn; after a couple of hours this energy wears out, and you watch the heavens and wish the Great Bear would wheel towards the horizon less slowly, and you cast glances to the east, and wonder when the pale rim of dawning light will begin to appear. One soon grows versed in the stars. During these last marches of ours, for instance, Gemini always rose an hour before Venus, and Venus an hour before the first of the dawn; I used to watch them, and rejoice, as they rose,

that I had worked through the night unvexed by that most trying of tortures—sleepiness that must go unsatisfied. And yet I usually found that “as the night was senescent, and the star-dials pointed to morn,” a battle had to be waged with sleep, in which victory could be assured only by dismounting and walking,—

While the dawning of the morrow  
Widened slowly westward all that while.

Perhaps the strangest of these night marches was this last one. The road led through a country known as the Valley of the Angel of Death (*Wadi i Malik al Maut*), a dreary plain knobbed and seamed all over with ridges and knolls of black rock or grey hardened clay, and the track wound between and among these, and sometimes over them, half in shade, half in light, now giving a far prospect over the rugged contorted region, fantastically scooped and carved and ribbed and buttressed in all directions, and now sinking between low walls of stone or stony earth, the sides of some dry torrent of salt, with white incrustations gleaming ghostly in the moonlight. A Persian couplet kept running through my head, to the accompaniment of a solemn hymn tune, till I

could scarce refrain from violating the silence of the night, and chanting it aloud,—

*Raftim o burdim dâgh i tu bar dil,  
Wadi ba wadi, manzil ba manzil.*<sup>3</sup>

The words mean, “ We marched and bore thy wound upon our heart, Valley by valley, stage by stage.” They seem sad enough to one for whom they happen to be true. Half the march had been got through, when, on reaching the top of a knoll, I found my bridle seized and my horse surrounded by a dozen ragged fellows with sticks. Their leader, who wore his cartridges in the Circassian manner across his breast, seemed to be a Persian military officer returning from Teheran. “ Where are you going,” he asked, “ and what is your business ? ” I told him, asked a few questions about the road, and went my way. “ It is not good,” said one of the men, “ that he should travel alone,”—a reference to the loss of dignity which separation from one’s retinue is supposed to entail in Persia. And now the Twin Brethren had risen,

<sup>3</sup> Where this couplet comes from I know not. I owe my memory of it to Mr. G. E. Ward, at present magistrate of Jaunpur, North-West Provinces of India, who mentions it in his account of his travels in Persia, as having occurred to him while crossing the same valley.

and the Bear was stooping his head to the horizon ; a wind arose, blowing from the fields of sleep, and a queer sort of bewilderment or glamour, compounded of the vivid moonlight, the hard lights and shadows of the rock-bound plain, the cool night wind, and a drowsiness defeated by rapid marching, descended upon my spirits and held me in a kind of glory till I stumbled on a salt river crossed by a quaint stone bridge, and saw dark figures start from the shadow of the high bank as I passed by. They were foot-travellers waiting for their companions left behind. "How far to Kinaragird ?" "One farsakh," but it proved five miles. I rode into the village, and feared to lose my way among the lanes and twisting watercourses. A man was sleeping on a bench before his door, full in the moonlight. I dismounted, and tapped his hand with my whip. His eyes opened slowly. "God have mercy on thy father (*pidarat biyamurzad*)," said he ; "what may you want ?" He pointed out the road to the post-house, and I asked him for a drink from the water-jug standing at his head. "Have you a cup ?" he asked. I had none. "Then I won't give you any water," he replied ; "go." This was the first and only time that a Persian refused me a drink from his water-

vessel; I set down the blame to Qum; "God be your keeper," said I, by way of a parting shot, "common humanity is something, after all." I reached the post-house just as Lucifer was rising over the eastern mountain. Here I got a drink, a couple of pillows, and an old carpet by way of blanket, and slept very comfortably till the mules came up after dawn. The early morning air was quite cold. Halting only to breakfast, we pushed on five farsakhs more to Shah Abdul Azim, within six miles of Teheran. As we were ascending the low hills of Kinaragird, a handsome lad with a face like a picture of an Italian boy overtook us, and smiling to the full extent of his white teeth, asked me when I had got in to Kinaragird. I did not think I had seen him before. "Don't you remember," he said, "that you stopped when you crossed the bridge, and asked us how far it was to Kinaragird?" I said that he was in the shadow, and I had not recognized him. He laughed, and told me that a Persian major had ridden by afterwards, and his horse had shied at the men sitting under the bank, whereupon the major unslung his gun, and was for firing at the supposed robbers. The lad was a Bakhtiari, and came from Khuramabad. We

reached Shah Abdul Azim at three in the afternoon, having marched forty-five miles in sixteen hours, and fairly earned our rest. After some trouble we succeeded in hiring rooms in a house of respectable dimensions. It was full of women who had come out on pilgrimage to the shrine—in other words, to spend a day in the country; but the owner soon made room for us, after we had concluded a bargain with him to his satisfaction. The heat from midday to sunset was very considerable, and a slight moisture in the air reminded me of India, but the night was quite cool, indeed chilly towards morning.

13th July, Teheran,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  farsakh.—To give an idea of the environs of Teheran, I must recall some of the features of the last stage of yesterday's march. The gilded dome of Shah Abdul Azim is a sanctified centre round which a large village has grown up. Approaching this place from Kinaragird, one feels inclined to despair of Persian civilization. Right up to the houses of this populous suburb extends the triumphant barbarism of the desert. And in truth the capital of Persia is an oasis reclaimed from the desert. As one crosses the Kinaragird hills, a well-watered plain is seen stretching east

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and west, while its farther or northern side is bounded by a brown mountain-wall, fifteen miles away, just dotted and streaked a little on the top with snow. That is Shimran. Behind the eastern flank of this mountain barrier, a snowy cone rises higher into the blue sky. That is Damavand. It is disappointing. I saw more snow on Zarda Kuh. Nevertheless, Shimran is 12,500 feet high, and Damavand more than 18,000. One proof of the magnitude of Shimran is the quantity of water it sends down into the Teheran plain. Coming down the mountain-side in flood, or filtering through its long foot-slope, the waters of Shimran collect in the hollow whence rises the opposing slope of the Kinaragird hills. Here we passed marshy tracts, though summer was in its height, and here also, for the last time, we saw the whiteness of salt like hoarfrost in patches on the ground. The steamy air recalled Indian plains after the rainy season, but the heat was much more tolerable and less relaxing than in India. Villages dotted the plain, the farthest being Shah Abdul Azim, embosomed in spacious groves and orchards. From the slope of the Kinaragird hills we had seen the straight line



of a causeway marked out the whole way to our halting-place. But the marking-out is all that has been done, or is likely to be done for an indefinite time. The old road, which we had to follow, degenerates into a mere track among convoluted water-courses, and by the perilous edges of pits. Nothing marks the proximity of a royal city—neither causeway nor well, nor roadside house, nor even the throng of passengers. But on entering the main street of the village the traveller does indeed come upon revelations. The street is paved, has side-walks for foot-passengers, and the open shops (arranged like fruiterers' booths in England) show a predominance of European goods. And twenty carriages line the street, unhorsed, unused apparently, but serviceable to prepare the traveller's mind for the splendours of Teheran. After this, it is a small thing to find a made road from Abdul Azim to the capital, a road that one might drive along, though dusty and shelterless and disagreeable. We turned aside to visit a garden half-way, and admired its shady planes and fruit-trees loaded with fruit.

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## CHAPTER VI.

## TEHERAN.

TEHERAN is entered from the Qum side through a tawdry blue-tiled gate, topped by a bold picture of Rustam's combat with the White Demon, wrought in coloured tiles. In design, this is equal to a school-boy's drawing on a slate; as a piece of colouring, it is effective enough. Passing under this work of art, one crosses the space between the *enceinte* and the town. The wall is several sizes too large for Teheran. It is an earthwork of modern design and sufficient solidity, but ruinous in parts, and destitute of guns. At length the glories of the High Street burst upon the view. Its even row of low, whitewashed houses, with flat roofs and narrow fronts, reminds one of a new bazar built by some flourishing Indian municipality. But the coffee-houses are distinctly Persian. They open on gardens behind,

and through the doors can be seen small round tables, samovars, teacups, and qalyans, arranged against a background of green leaves and falling water. Presently one passes a coffee-house of European fashion, with elegant couches and mirrors, and a drinking-bar. This is a speculation of the Count's, of whom more anon. Then there is a tailor's shop, which might pass for European if it had glass in the windows; and one or two inscriptions, such as *Usine à Gaz*, *Salle à Photographie*, suggest the invasion of western influences. The street ends in a square surrounded by barracks, whence another street leads through the European quarter. Here is an hotel, kept by an Armenian—comfortable enough, though bestowed in a two-storied Persian house, with small rooms, steep stairs of brick, and a deep courtyard in the middle. One has to do without a bath-room, and without bed or bedding; but the food is not bad, and good light wine can be had cheap.

I had spent a couple of hours in this hotel, when a telegraph ghulam came with a letter from Colonel Murdoch Smith, the chief of the Anglo-Indian telegraph in Persia, inviting me to stay in his house in Gulahek. This unex-

pected kindness removed all my anxiety as to quarters in Teheran; I rode to Gulahek that evening, and revelled in the luxury of an excellent English dinner. Colonel Smith enjoys the advantage of living in a house of his own building. It is like a two-storied Indian bungalow, built of brick, and has spacious grounds around it, most prettily wooded. A tank, paved with blue tiles, stands at one side—a delightful bathing-place in the summer mornings. During my fortnight's stay in Gulahek, the weather was warm enough for white clothing, and from noon till four o'clock it was sleepily hot; but inconvenience from the heat there was none, and I lived, for my part, in perpetual envy of the happy lot of those who are stationed in this paradise. When the heat of the day was spent, the evenings were charming. They are associated in my memory with quietness and sunlight on the grass, chequered by shade from broad-leaved walnut-trees.

Gulahek lies 700 feet higher than Teheran, and 4500 feet above the sea-level. It is connected with Teheran by a decent gravel road, six miles long, ascending the foot-slope of Shimran. This road is bordered with poplars,

and a small stream of water runs on each side of it. The poplars give a certain amount of shade, except at midday; and despite several great gaps in their ranks, and the huge dust raised by carriages, one is content to commend the Government for its laudable exertions in public works. On either side of the road, the bare stony slope stretches away for miles and miles. To the left of Gulahek is Zarganda, where the Russian mission resides. Gulahek is the pleasanter place. The English Legation lies ensconced in the loveliest gardens, with grass and running water, and shade of elms, walnuts, and plane-trees. Zarganda is less open, and is pent up with a ravine on one side. Higher up the foot-slope of Shimran are Tajrîsh, Niavaran, and other villages, whose steep streets are overshadowed by foliage; and Paskala nestles on the mountain-side itself, in a hollow above a waterfall. Towards that huge rampart, all the view is green and fresh, and swept by mountain breezes; but southwards one overlooks the hazy plain of Teheran, and beyond that the low hills of Kinaragird, and the black rugged mountain that watches the kavîr and the caravansarai of Hauz-i-Sultan, fifty miles away. Perhaps in no Persian land-

scape are the characteristics of the country—mountains and desert, and human settlements depending on mountain-water—more strikingly brought together.

The palaces of the Shah deserve some notice. I did not see his town residence; but of the many summer lodges which dot the foot-slope of Shimran, I saw four or five, notably Saltanatabad, which being comparatively recent, and on a grand scale, may serve as a specimen of the rest. It lies some 600 feet higher than Gulahek, in the midst of a noble garden, where poplars and planes give ample shade, and mulberries, plums, apples, and cherries can be gathered till one grows tired. Streams of clear water run by the sides of the alleys, and fountains with pellucid basins fill up the vista in various directions, while a great tank, a hundred yards long by sixty broad, and eight or nine feet deep, occupies the centre. Above this stands a large summer-house. Its central hall, paved with blue tiles, is a polygon of some twenty yards in diameter; a fountain plays in the middle, and a raised daïs occupies a recess at one side. The angles are adorned with frescoes, the work of Persian artists, representing European scenes, though one



cannot imagine what principle has guided the selection. One picture shows the lobby of the House of Commons; another, the interior of some large London restaurant; a third, the inside of a church during service; a fourth, the nave of some cathedral. The summer-house is three stories high, and the upper floors are laid out in rooms illustrated by mirrors and decorated with pictures of joviality and festive proceedings between two persons. These are ludicrous to the last degree, both youth and maiden being invariably arrayed in what the artist considered the latest European fashion, while their eyes have no regard for their own concerns, but are steadily directed on the beholder. One panel bears the figure of a gigantic wasp-waisted white-crinolined damsel, in whose lap sprawls a lover about half her size, "with love and wine at once oppressed;" the wine-cup dangling from his nerveless hand spills its ruby contents over the white skirt of his sweetheart. I had the curiosity to ascend above the third story into the loft under the roof, and found it the hottest place I had ever entered in my life; hotter, no doubt, than the *piombi* of Venice, for Teheran is nearer the sun, and no roof could be much thinner than

the copper sheathing of this painted dome. Besides this principal summer-house, there are several other buildings in various parts of the grounds. One is an octagonal tower, sixty feet high, mounting in a series of rooms to the Shah's bedroom at the top. Another is a clock tower of much the same pattern. Another is the Shah's menagerie, a gallery filled with pictures of wild animals, some of which are copied from English designs, such as the picture of the grizzly bear sitting on a pine-trunk which bridges a cañon, while he holds the dead body of a horse under his fore-paws—a design that forms the frontispiece, if I mistake not, to the book called *The Great Lone Land* — but most of them original, indeed wonderfully and fearfully so. The expression of the mouth of the hippopotamus is especially uncanny. The birds are much better done. A couple of condors on a dead ox are indeed twice the size of their quarry, but when that point is overlooked one finds something to admire in the rendering of the plumage and in the general pose. The Persians are most successful in portrait-painting. When they lay fancy aside, and go in for faithful representation of real men, they can produce very

respectable likenesses. In Ishratabad, a palace of Fath Ali Shah's, the walls of one room are covered with paintings representing that monarch sitting in high durbar, surrounded by his sons, the officers of his court, and the ambassadors of foreign Powers. Here there is plenty to commend. The French ambassador is the exact type of a soldier and gentleman of that country and period; Sir John Malcolm looks somewhat sallow, as befits an Indian official; and his comparative youthfulness recalls the rapid promotion of those days; while his rival, Sir Harford Jones, the Parliament's man, is a genuine Britisher, florid and stolid, with sandy mutton-chop whisker and round blonde face beaming with ineffable complacency. The faces of the Persian officials, again, are full of character. One particularly attracted my attention; it was the likeness of the governor of Laristan, a stout jolly personage, with a humorous twinkle in his eye—a man, I am sure, who loved a good glass and a good story. The Prince of Gurjistan reminds one of losses suffered by Persia on her north-western frontier since the days when Georgia was vassal to Fath Ali Shah. Among the crowd of faces in various tints from brown to fair, the copper phiz of

Tippoo Sultan's envoys looks unmistakably Indian. On first landing in Persia, one is much struck by the difference between the people of the country and Indian Mussalmans. The contrast is forgotten as one becomes habituated to Persian features and manners, but revives in full force at the sight of such a picture as this, where the high-class Indian munshi is depicted to the life, side by side with Persians of similar rank and calling.

Other palaces are Qasr-i-Qajar, half-way between Teheran and Gulahek; Dushan Tappa, or the Rabbit Hill, perched uncomfortably on a rock in the plain eastward of Teheran; and a smaller lodge high up the foot-slope of Shimran, with a deep tank of very clear and cold water, and with walls papered, like a nursery in an English home, with pictures cut from the pages of the *Illustrated London News* and the *Graphic*. This lofty lodge, as well as Saltanatabad, is associated in my memory with a pleasant day spent there in the company of friends from the English Legation, and also from Zarganda.

Perhaps what I have written will serve to show that royal state in Persia is half barbarous yet, and decidedly deficient in finish. It has much that is bright and striking in colour,

gilding, and mirror-ornamentation; but costliness and splendour will be looked for in vain. The things that seemed to me in best taste were certain doors and some windows of carved wood, where design and execution were pretty and delicate. The flooring of a room in the women's apartment in Saltanatabad was pretty enough; it consisted of glass tiles laid over a groundwork of blue rosettes. In the *sardâba* or underground chambers of the Nigaristan palace in Teheran city, where Fath Ali Shah used to disport himself with his ladies in the heat of the summer day, one can still see, and, if he chooses, slide down, the *sursura*, or shoot of white marble, rubbed smooth by the white limbs of that gracious monarch's many wives, as they used to come gliding into his royal arms. It is an inclined plane, down which one shoots with considerable velocity in a sitting posture, to plunge (if not stopped) into a marble tank at the foot. I solemnly slid down it, in riding-boots and spurs, feeling that I but inadequately represented the spirit of the place.

Opinion seems to be divided as to whether the Shah's visits to Europe have done him good or not. I have heard it said that one result of

them has been to diminish his respect for the European Powers. Be that as it may, Teheran at least has gained something by the Shah's experience of European roads. It is true that the Shah has not done so much for the improvement of his capital in ten years as an Anglo-Indian magistrate would have done in two. Teheran is a place of great capabilities. It might be made into a station not inferior to the best of our stations in the Himalayas. An energetic municipal committee would soon work wonders here. One might have miles on miles of shady alleys, acres on acres of gardens, cricket-ground, polo-ground, race-course, grand mall, even boat races and skating on the reservoirs which a prudent government would excavate on the slopes of Shimran, to store the winter rains. But under a Persian government, one must be thankful for the smallest mercies, and it is a great satisfaction to find that the principal streets of Teheran are paved. Riding down from Gulahek, one enters the European quarter, passes the winter residence and gardens of the British Legation, looking green and lovely behind their tall iron railings—a mark of civilization surpassing anything the Shah can show, whose very palace in town

was enclosed by a mud wall until lately, when that deformity has been replaced by a poor paling of unpainted wood—and, descending a street paved with cobble-stones and lined by two-storied houses of a style half European, one enters the barrack-square or parade-ground. This is considerably smaller than the King's Square of Isfahan. One road out of it leads to the gate on the Qum side ; another leads down a paved alley with side walks shaded by trees, and into a square filled by a large tank, where numerous bathers disport themselves, with *lungis* decently bound about their hips. A great bronze gun, fourteen feet long, stands at one end of the tank, on a clumsy wooden carriage. This alley and these two squares are the best parts of Teheran. As for the bazars, they are perhaps inferior to those of Isfahan, and I doubt if European trade finds so much scope in Teheran as in Isfahan or Tabriz, though the demands of the large European community fill a shop or two in the Sabzi Bazar with such goods as one may see in the familiar Parsee's or Bengalee Baboo's "Europe store" in a mufassal Indian station.

It was in one of these shops, kept by an Armenian named Arratoon, who had been in

Calcutta, and to whom I was obliged for a bill on London (procured by him by telegraphing to Isfahan), that I met an ex-major in the army of Shir Ali, the late unfortunate Amir of Afghanistan. The man was a tall, strong-built fellow, and spoke Persian fluently enough, with the Indian accent. His story was that General Roberts, on entering Cabul, had seized him, among others, and kept him in confinement two months. He had subsequently accompanied General Roberts to Candahar, and thence had gone on pilgrimage, and finally came to Persia. He was outspoken enough, but courteous withal, and anxious to hear news of Ayub Khan. This was a few days before Ayub's temporary success at Candahar. He hoped and believed that Ayub would win. "There were sixty regiments of foot and twelve of horse," he said, "in the army of Shir Ali, and these are all for Ayub. If Ayub gets Candahar, recruits will come in at the rate of four hundred men a day. Do you think," he continued, "that Abdurrahman is not a Russian? Why, he was the pensioner of Russia for twelve years." One thing seemed to affect my friend grievously, and I was somewhat struck by it, as I had noticed special



stress laid upon the same point by one or two Persians and Indian Musalmans in talking of the late Afghan war. It was that matter of military executions which followed the occupation of Cabul. "It is you," he said, "who will not be friends with us. You were the aggressors (*shuma bar ma zor awardid*). General Roberts came to Cabul, and hanged one and shot another. That was no way to win the Afghans. If you had shown us considerate treatment (*dilâsâ*) we should have been your friends; but you have made us your enemies." He was in command (he said) of four regiments coming from Balkh, at the time when Yaqub Khan surrendered himself into General Roberts' hands. Yaqub Khan wrote three letters bidding him disband the four regiments. Did that look as if Yaqub Khan had been guilty of compliance in the murder of our envoy? "Well," I said, "let bygones be bygones; we don't intend to interfere with Afghanistan any more." To this he replied that non-interference would do very well, if there were no Russia in the background.

A few words may be added concerning the Shah's army. The regiments drilled by Austrian officers are said to be creditable. I had

not an opportunity of seeing these, for they had gone to fight the Kurds (the Azarbaijan regiments had put down the Kurds before they arrived); but I did see many hundreds of infantry soldiers of sorts: Teheran is full of them. The general impression conveyed by Persian soldiery is that the army is not recruited from the warlike part of the population. It may be that the mountain and desert tribes, who look so soldier-like on their native soil, degenerate into bazar loafers after a month's residence in the city. At any rate, one cannot help doubting whether the best infantry regiment in Teheran would stand a charge of Kashkai horse; and to put Persian infantry into the field against anything like an equal force of Europeans would seem like courting defeat. It is true that a civilian ought not to hazard an opinion on military matters. But let me say this much, that the untidiness, the carelessness, the technical ignorance, the general fecklessness of the Persian soldier exist in as great a degree as any imagination, military or civil, can conceive. There is nothing soldier-like in the men; they are hangers-on of the bazars, where they spend their time in buying and selling, eating and

smoking. Here and there one sees a few sentries with Werndl breech-loaders, but the great majority have the old Brown Bess, though the Shah has Werndl rifles in stock. Two cavalry regiments, of 350 men each, have been drilled by Colonel Dimontovich on the Cossack pattern. I saw something of them. They did not seem to me to be equal to a Bengal cavalry regiment. While I was in Teheran, the rumour went that Colonel Dimontovich and the Austrian officers would shortly leave the Shah's service—the Shah being unwilling to renew their engagement at the rate of 1500 tomans (600*l.*) a year for a colonel, and so on. Since then, it has been reported that the Austrian officers are to be replaced by Russian officers. It was Colonel Dimontovich's opinion that the regiments would speedily go to the bad if their officers were withdrawn. Perhaps their discipline is not calculated to stand any severe strain even as it is. There was some kind of mutiny or insubordination among the so-called Cossacks while I was in Teheran; the matter was hushed up.

Besides the military, there is a drilled police force in Teheran, under the management of a Count of Montefiore. I believe that the Count

is an Italian nobleman, who followed his sovereign into exile when the kingdom of Naples fell before Garibaldi. After holding a commission in the Austrian army, his fortunes led him to Persia, and the latest sphere found for his energies to work in has been this of the police. He has organized a force which in external appearance is neat enough. Riding through the streets of Teheran, the traveller occasionally passes a house in the verandah of which swords are hung and muskets piled, and two or three men in a neat dark-coloured uniform draw up and salute the passing Farangi. This is a police-station. The police do not seem to be popular among the inhabitants of Teheran. Their officers are mere lads, very handsome and spruce in their grey uniforms, and fond of riding about with sabres clanking by their sides, but scarcely the sort of people to command the confidence of the public. There was some story of the Count's having caused the cheeks of two Sayyids to be publicly slapped, on the charge of drunkenness; of their having gone to the Imam Juma with their wrongs; and of the Count's life being in danger from the populace. The police force is said to be recruited from among the *lutis* or bad

characters of Teheran. This may or may not be true; but at any rate the institution is one which hardly possesses the elements of durability.

I had the pleasure of an interview with the Foreign Minister (*Vazir-i-Kharija*). The Persian attaché of the British Legation accompanied me, and procured me an introduction. We found the minister engaged in conversation with the Turkish ambassador, who is a prosy old fellow, and seemed inclined to take up his quarters permanently on the spot; but after half an hour of waiting, his visit was conducted to an end, and we were admitted. The minister is a most affable old gentleman, speaking Persian only. He asked a number of questions about India, its rainy season, its natural products, irrigation, native manufactures, and how the latter fared in competition with Manchester.

From Teheran, as from Bushire, Shiraz, and Isfahan, I carried away the most grateful memories of kindness and hospitality shown me by the European residents. I had also the good fortune to have a companion in travel for the first few stages of my way northward. Captain Wells, R.E., asked me to accompany

him on an expedition to the Lar Valley, for the contemplation of nature and the catching of trout. An ascent of Damavand was also purposed, if possible. On the 28th of July we left Teheran.

## CHAPTER VII.

## TEHERAN TO DAMAVAND.

## SIXTEEN FARSAKHS: TEN DAYS.

28th July, Teheran to Afcha, 6 farsakhs; 4.30 p.m. to 9 p.m.—We had some trouble in procuring mules in Teheran. Muleteers objected to taking the Mazandaran road at that season of the year. At last, by application to the Vazir-i-Kharija, Sayyid Ali succeeded in impressing eleven mules which had just come from carrying a Persian colonel's luggage up from Shustar, and were badly galled and weakened by marches excessively long and rapid. The muleteer was an Arab—a contrast to the obedient and cheerful Persian *charvadars* who had hitherto accompanied me. Leaving the mules loading, Captain Wells and I rode on. The road climbs the first slope—the out-works, as it were—of Shimran, and discloses a fine view from their summit. The valley of the

Jâjarud lies below, with villages embosomed in orchards at its lower end; on the farther side of the valley rise the Shimran mountains, tier after tier, and the huge cone of Damavand fills up the view to the right. Damavand now dawns upon one for the first time in its true proportions. One can see not only the cone of snow, but the vast skirts of the mountain, seamed with torrent-beds. We descended into the valley, crossed the Jâjarud, passed through two villages, and began the ascent of the central ridge of Shimran, or perhaps one should rather say, Elburz. We found the road winding up a narrow spur, whence we looked down alternately on villages nestling in dells upon the left hand and the right. It was nine at night when we reached Âfcha, whither Captain Wells's cook had gone before us. He had taken a very respectable house, and we slept comfortably after dinner.

*29th July, Âfcha to the Lar, 4 farsakhs, 3.30 p.m. to 8 p.m.*—Next morning we got news that one mule had been lost in the darkness while crossing the first ridge, and that three others were lying exhausted in the lower part of the village. We went down and found the poor animals unable to carry their loads any further.



They had spent the night without food, and one of them seemed ready to die of wounds and starvation. We raised a mule in the village, and had part of the loads brought up; ordered barley for the poor beasts; and wished that the lost mule would arrive with the four others which had been detained while the muleteer was searching for it. They did arrive about midday, whereupon we sent off the cook, and followed more leisurely with two mules and a servant. The climb to the top of the central ridge was the longest and most wearisome I experienced in Persia. It is called the Gardana i Hazar Cham, or saddle-back of a thousand windings. The road is a good one, fully equal to our roads in the lower Himalayas. It goes winding up and up, disclosing still more distant heights at every turn, till it reaches an elevation of some 13,000 feet, and Damavand comes into view again, nearer and grander than ever. From this point the road descends into a narrow valley, filled by the broad bed of a dry mountain-stream. Here we found an encampment of wood-cutters, near a small and dirty caravansarai. The men assured us that we had only a little way further to go, if we meant to halt at the *yurt* of the Khanlar Khan.

In these parts, a collection of black tents is called by the Turkish name *yurt*, instead of the Arabic *ahsham* which one hears in Fars and the Bakhtiari mountains. We crossed the valley, and climbed another ridge. Darkness was coming on, and we could see no signs of black tents. At length, as we descended the farther slope, first one and two, and then many lights began to twinkle in the valley at our feet, and we knew there were tents, though whether the cook was forthcoming seemed more than doubtful. As our shouts failed to awaken a response, we made for the light most directly before us, and amid huge barking of dogs, held colloquy with the owner of three black tents. He was able to supply our needs. He lighted us a fire, by the glare of which we pitched our own tent, and after we had fed the horses and the two ill-favoured mules which carried our tent and bedding, the womanfolk brought us bread and milk, cheese and butter, whereon we dined.

It was amusing to watch the indolence of the master of the tents. He would fulfil all the duties of hospitality, but never dreamed of lending us a hand in pitching the tent or tending the animals. When chaffed about

this, he simply replied, "Why should I work, when I can sit still?"

*30th July to 3rd August, fishing down Lar River.*—Next morning we found the long-sought Lar river flowing a few score yards beyond the tent, and having loaded up again and given our host our benediction and four krans, we wended down-stream for the space of three hours, till we were aware of a melancholy man who lay stretched along a grassy bank, and pored upon the Lar that babbled by. Certain apparatus of cookery by his side suggested the propriety of calling to him, whereupon he began to dance and confessed himself the missing cook; acknowledged, moreover, that he had breakfast ready, and invited us across the stream. So great was our joy, that we thought it a small thing when one of the mules foundered in a quagmire and lay half an hour with beautiful spring water flowing over our bedding. While we were revelling in chicken-stew, the remainder of our caravan came up, and now, with reunited *penates*, we were free to begin fishing with light hearts. Sayyid Ali had begun the march from Âfcha before sunrise, and certainly had hurried the mules on at a good rate. He told me that he

was well-nigh frozen while crossing the gardana, but he found some consolation in solemnly chaffing a mulla who happened to be his travelling companion. This worthy beguiled the way with discussions on religious topics, varied with praises of the marvellous achievements of Ali as a husband and a man of God.

The trout-fishing of the Lar has been celebrated by Colonel Baker in his book *Clouds in the East*, and illustrated, moreover, by a picture of remarkable truthfulness, as I can testify, who have beheld the scene depicted, and have been struck by the likeness. The fishing-ground is not more than five miles in length, from the beginnings of the river to the mouth of the gorge where it becomes a torrent, and whence it does not emerge till, after many leagues of restless wandering, it debouches on the warm and teeming plains of Mazandaran. This five-mile space is a valley green with turf, or white with broad belts of shingle; above the river-bed, a grey plateau slopes upwards on the left, while the right bank, more immediately under the rocky hill, is watered by many springs. We camped two days near a spot called the Forty Fountains, and three days opposite the mouth of the Safid Ab, a stream which brings

down waters white with lime, and discolours the Lar a long way below the point of confluence. In these five days we had excellent sport, chiefly in the evenings. I never was a fisherman, but the simplicity of the Lar trout can be practised on by any tyro, and I caught quite enough to satisfy me, while Captain Wells made a much larger bag. The fish are small—at least, we saw none heavier than a pound, but they are genuine trout, and excellent eating. The Shah, with his barbaric nets, had been there before us, and would have spoiled the sport, had that been possible. The river itself has no small charm. It is beautifully clear, and flows over shingly shallows, or in rapids under high banks, or through a series of pools among boulders, past low shelves of turf, where the trout nestle in “the wave-worn horns of the echoing bank,” and dart at the fly as soon as it settles on the water. The climate is perfect. One can be out all day long without feeling the sun, and the deep blue of the sky looks all the intenser for the fleecy cloud-masses that congregate towards evening. The valley was dotted over with black tents, whence we partly drew our supplies. All the time that we were here, I seemed to be haunted by the presence

of Damavand. If I raised my eyes from fishing they were drawn aloft to that snowy cone piercing the blue depths of the sky; and at night a shimmering lustre above the mountain ridge told us that the great solitary peak was looking into our tent.

*4th August, Lar to Raina, 5 farsakhs; 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.*—We marched from Lar to the foot of Damavand, by a very bad road, or rather track, along the head of the gorge which held the river three hundred feet below. A brief break in the gorge, where three valleys join, affords a level space where the river is crossed by a bridge carrying the high road from Teheran. This road we now followed as it rose higher and higher, leaving the river far below on our right. The contrasts of light and shade as we looked down on the river-bed were so hard and glaring as almost to dazzle the eye. We were more than a thousand feet above the river, and were moving parallel to its downward course, along the mountain-side, with mountains on our right across the narrow valley. These showed only huge steepes of black and reddish-brown rock, with patches of snow at the top, and here and there an inaccessible scrap of verdure fed by some tiny spring.

Behind us the gorge turned off sharply to the right, leaving an unimpeded view of two valleys or straths, which send down two streams to join the Lar; their combined waters are called the Harâs from this point onwards to Mazandaran. The river could be seen in glimpses of white foam and blue pools, so far below us and yet so distinct that to look long became almost painful. Trees formed no part of the landscape; we had seen none since leaving Âfcha, and it was not till near the end of the day's march that we rounded a curve of the mountain-side and came in sight of Raina, on a plateau set with walnut-trees and orchards. The mules, being ahead of us, descended to Ask on the river, but we determined to take Raina as our halting-place, as being a thousand feet higher up the skirts of Damavand. Captain Wells rode in search of quarters, while I went down into Ask, and found it very quaintly pitched at the bottom of the gorge, between the loud stream and the cliffs, in a space that hardly held the houses, let alone the terrace-fields and hanging gardens that occupied every ledge. As I stumbled up and down its uneven lanes, I heard a voice hail me in French, and observed a semi-Europeanized head stuck out

of an upper window. It was some small official from Teheran. His French was speedily exhausted, and as he could tell me nothing about the mules, I passed on, crossed the torrent by a good stone bridge, and finally came upon the caravan just unloaded. Great was Sayyid Ali's disgust at having to load up again and march to Raina. I saw the loading begun, and went on to Raina by the shortest route, a track that zigzagged up a long slope of shale, where riding was out of the question, and my horse refused three or four times as I was leading him. At the foot were a number of caves in the cliff, with wooden doors. These are used as sheep-pens, and sometimes as human dwellings. I saw many more of them on the way to Mazandaran. Arrived in Raina, I found that Captain Wells had procured very good quarters. We engaged four guides, and prepared to begin the ascent of Damavand next morning.

*5th August, Ascent to foot of cone of Damavand.*—Raina has an elevation of some 8000 feet above the sea-level. The height of Damavand, by the Russian survey, is 18,600 feet. The ascent has been accomplished often enough. The present English Minister at



Teheran (Mr. Ronald Thomson) has done it twice. Considering its magnitude, indeed, the mountain may be called exceptionally easy to climb, and it offers nothing in the shape of danger from the bottom to the top. Nevertheless, the job is a tough one, and I would not lightly undertake it again. We took four mules, with our bedding and modest kitchen furniture, provisions, and wraps for the servants. A respectable sort of road leads up the skirts of the mountain, but dwindles away and loses itself after ascending a couple of thousand feet, and one has to pick a path, according to fancy, among the clumps of coarse grass which cover the slope. Gradually these too disappear, and the mountain-side seems one great slope of loose stones, with long snow-fields reaching down from above, and ridges of rock symmetrically radiating from top to base. Damavand has been a volcano, and owes its regular shape of cone or pyramid to the impartiality with which it used to shower stones around in its younger and more active days. The upper part of the mountain is as nearly an accurate cone as anything on that vast scale can be expected to be, but the work of clambering up endless steepes of rocky fragments begins long

before one reaches what is called the base of the cone. We halted for breakfast by a couple of black tents, near the edge of the grassy zone. How the mules got beyond this point, I know not; but I half believe they would have gone to the top of Damavand if we had driven them. There seems to be nothing that a Persian mule, even if half-starved and badly galled, is incapable of surmounting. After a short rest, we began to climb again. Captain Wells arrived at our final halting-place about noon; I about half-past one; the mules at five, some delay having been caused by one mule rolling down a stony slope with his load, while the muleteer-lad sat down and wept. The spot chosen was the last solitary patch of grass, a few hundred feet below a great snow-field. We guessed the elevation at 14,000 feet. We were on the south-east face of the mountain, and all the view we had was of the Harâs gorge and the mountains beyond. From their sides projected a spur, levelled at the top into a sloping plateau, and on this plateau stood three or four villages, while a couple more could be seen in the bottom of the gorge. Here again, as so often in Persia, the air had a kind of stereo-

scopic quality, making each village and every jutting point and buttress of the mountain-wall stand out with a hardness and distinctness that seemed almost pitiless to us in our isolation under the rocks and snow. By going a couple of hundred yards to the right, we could overlook Shimran and see all its summits lower than the point where we stood, and trace our pleasant fishing-ground throughout the windings of the Lar. The mules fell to grazing with great apparent relish, while we made our arrangements for the night. The grassy slope was so steep that we gave up the notion of sleeping on it, and built ourselves level beds among the adjoining stones. A carpet, some rugs, and the curtains of a tent, furnished bedding enough for the two servants, the muleteer, and our guides. It was the month of Ramazan, and the guides would touch no food till the sun had disappeared. The day's climb and the fasting together seemed to have affected them very little, if at all. After dark, we had a cup of tea, and then went to bed. Fortunately there was no wind, and by putting one's head under the blankets, the cold could be defied. I felt a certain difficulty of breathing, which I ascribed to the elevation. One sleeps in some

queer places during travels in Persia, but I think this night's quarters were the queerest of all. I was wakened by the cold two or three times in the course of the night, and on looking over the edge of the bed, my first sensation was as if bed and all were on the point of rolling down the vast black mountain-side into the white mist that lay like a fleecy cloak over the river. To look upwards was not more encouraging. The snowy cone seemed to fill the air with chilliness, and made one shiver. To these elements of strangeness was added an odd sort of feeling that I had no business to be there. The heights above had no cognizance of any such person; the gulfs below were yawning in repudiation. Village lights so many thousand feet beneath seemed to mark the proper confines of humanity. A doleful bird wailed towards morning, with a lamentable note repeated at intervals just long enough to make one hope it was going to stop.

*6th August, Ascent of the Cone.*—It wanted an hour of daylight by the time we had swallowed our soup and were starting on our upward way. We began with the usual inclined plain of rocky débris, but above this was the snow-field, and evidently we must take

the one side or the other, the steep snow being impracticable. "Do you see that knife-edge (*tigha*)?" asked a guide. "That is our way." It was one of those ridges of rock which radiated from the apex of the cone, like the ribs of a half-closed umbrella. Let me now spare myself the renovation of unspeakable labour, and abridge my description of Damavand, by saying that the whole of the rest of the way, to the very foot of the crater, was an alternation of this "knife-edge" with stony slopes, each steeper and more crumbly than the last; these being flanked by fields of snow, or by precipices dropping down to a deep-scored torrent-bed. The knife-edge was comparatively plain sailing; one had firm foothold, and rock-seats to rest on. But the stony slopes were fatiguing in the extreme, and the more so as we approached the top, where the stones became smaller, till at last it was mere scrambling up gravel and slipping back half-way. What kept one's heart up was the ever-recurring prospect of some specular rock from whose summit, said the guides, one might see the very top of the mountain, the goal of our travail. And at length I did reach such a rock, and saw the yellow crater, and Captain

Wells's white helmet peering over the edge. The tenuity of the mountain air seemed to produce no effect upon him. For my part, I had never been in such high altitudes before, and perhaps it may not be uninteresting to relate my sensations. At the foot of the mountain we had been warned that we should feel giddy as we neared the top, and I was on the look-out for some such affliction, but I felt neither giddiness nor headache, nor singing in the ears, nor any other of those painful symptoms which one reads of as mitigating the delights of climbing in Alpine heights sublime. What troubled me was a marvellous shortness of breath, or, rather, the impossibility of inhaling enough to go on with. In the final stages of the ascent, this kind of exhaustion reached such a degree that four steps at a time were the utmost I could accomplish without a pause for rest; and I know not how long I should have been in climbing the crater, had not Captain Wells come with a couple of guides and helped me to pull up. He had done the ascent from our night's halting-place in little more than four hours; I was eight hours over it, and never desire to go through eight hours of such labour again. One of the guides, who

kept with me, had so violent a headache that he lay at the foot of the crater in a kind of stupor till we began the descent. He had been complaining to me during the last two hours of the climb, saying repeatedly, *Kuh mara kusht*, "The mountain has done for me."

The crater is some 200 yards in diameter, girt with a ring of yellow rocks of nearly pure sulphur, exhaling a pestiferous smell. The hollow is entirely filled up with snow. From the rocks, Teheran can be seen, and the Kohrud mountains a hundred and sixty miles south of it: the Great Kavir can be dimly perceived through its haze of heat to the south-east; while to the north—a faint blue field under the horizon—stretches the Caspian, behind the cloudy forests of Mazandaran. On the right hand and on the left were mountains of from 10,000 to 12,000 feet in height; we overlooked them all, with their thinly-scattered snows. But what a lifeless prospect! Teheran so many miles away, and all the rest mere desert and crag and desolation, with here and there a village lost on the bare mountain-side.

It was half-past twelve when I arrived. I slept till one, and then, after a parting look

round, we began the descent of the eastern face of Damavand. The long slopes of débris proved far easier to descend than to climb, and where a short space of snow had to be crossed, we glissaded rapidly in a sitting posture. I was haunted by an uneasy feeling that we should have to do the ascent over again ; and as I looked back at the side of the mountain rising ever higher behind us, a sort of despair seemed to take possession of me in spite of reason. But presently we dived into a ravine where the view was limited by narrow walls of rock ; and when we emerged again I found I had passed out of the spell of the mountain, and began to understand that this night we should dine at home. It is not without a meaning that the Persians ascribe a talisman to Damavand and many another lonely peak ; the mountain veritably has an influence of its own, and makes the same felt in various ways, physical and imaginative. We descended one stony slope after another, marched three miles along a level spur, and then came down straight on Ab-i-Garm, which we reached at half-past six. Here is a sulphur spring, in whose hot waters we had a refreshing bathe. Our horses, sent from Raina, were awaiting us, and by half-past



eight we were sitting over a good dinner provided by Sayyid Ali, and rejoicing in the day's success. My sleep that night was simply delicious.

Before leaving Raina, I ought to mention the beauty of our host's wife. I saw her occasionally as she was making our room ready for us. She had a face like a Madonna, and as fair (I thought) as an English girl's. I suppose she was about two-and-twenty years old.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## DAMAVAND TO MASHHAD-I-SAR.

## TWENTY-FIVE FARSAKHS : SIX DAYS.

*7th August, Raina to Baijan, 4 farsakhs ; 10.30 a.m. to 3 p.m.*—I bade good-bye to Captain Wells with regret, and set out alone for Mazandaran, while he returned to kill more trout by the pleasant banks of the Lar. Here also I parted with the yuzbashi whom the Vazir-i-Kharrija had told off to accompany me from Teheran. This personage, like all his tribe, had from the first regarded his duty as consisting merely in the enjoyment of an agreeable summer excursion provided *gratis*, and had in fact brought his little son with him to share the fun, and the farther he went the bigger gratuity he expected for the pleasure of his gentlemanly society. I accordingly paid him off here, and wondered why I had ever taken him on; but the truth was that I wanted a man who knew the road

to Mashhad-i-Sar, and this man, who knew nothing, was foisted upon me.

Having sold a horse and pony to Captain Wells, my last caravan consisted of two horses and six mules. I had three servants and one muleteer. We descended to the level of the river, and marched along its left bank. After ten miles we passed through a village which straggled picturesquely along either side of the river. A high mountain rose behind it on the farther side of the river, and a gorge opening towards its foot showed the silver streak of a waterfall against the background of black and scornful crags. We rode under walnut and mulberry trees, and by endless trellises of vines, crowded into the narrow space between the stream and the cliffs. A mile farther, we passed another village in a hollow high up the mountain on the right bank of the river. Thence the defile narrows, and gradually becomes shut in between cliffs 150 to 200 feet high, behind which the mountains rise 4000 and 5000 feet higher, but the pass is so narrow that their summits can rarely be seen. One feels buried in the mountains, oppressed with a weight of giant hills. When a momentary glimpse is caught of a distant summit, the far-

off height and magnitude seem to bear upon one like a weight. Perhaps the change seemed especially striking to me, after the day spent on Damavand, with nothing around but the sky. Occasionally we passed caves hollowed out at the foot of the cliffs, and used, doubtless, as shelter-houses in the winter. The road was excellent. It was made by European engineers under the Shah's orders, some four or five years ago. In one of the narrowest parts of the defile, where the roadway has been cut out under the cliffs, a tablet sculptured in the rock represents Nasir-ud-Din Shah on horseback, with his grandees standing round him. The figures are life size and raised in relief about three inches; the likenesses are good, and the horse, which faces the spectator, is well foreshortened. A long rhyming inscription borders the tablet, recording, among other things, that the road was made for the convenience of the people of Mazandaran; the date is 1295 H. (1877-78). We crossed the river three times in the course of the day, by good stone bridges. We passed some sulphur springs, but none to be compared in size with that below Ask, whose pool of deep blue water with white edges of sulphur makes a bright and notable feature in

the landscape that lies at one's feet, and beguiles the tedium of the climb up to Raina. Our halting-place, Baijan, proved to be a very small village at the mouth of a ravine on the right bank of the river, and 100 feet above it. Sayyid Ali found me very respectable quarters. I slept on the roof, looking towards the black cliff at whose base the stream ran by, moaning through the night.

*8th August, Baijan to Shahzadi, 6 farsakhs*  
6.15 a.m. to 1.45 p.m.—Next day we marched ten miles between mountain sides more or less precipitous, and always bare—irregular masses of rock and shelves of stone, or else sheer scarps, sometimes 400 feet high, coming down on the river like a wall, and overhanging the road. Traces of the old road could often be seen, justifying what travellers have written of the danger and difficulty of this route in former years; but the new road leaves nothing to be desired. The river changes colour at Baijan from blue to grey, after receiving an affluent from the hills of clay and slate. As we went on, a few tamarisk bushes began to appear in the river bed, then some willows, and casual patches of grass as the defile widened, and a few reeds, a stray pomegranate bush or two,

began to fringe the water's edge; till, after eighteen miles, a turning brought us full in face of a great mountain, rising 5000 feet above us, and covered with forest from top to base, save where, in the middle, a broad bare strip marked the path of a landslide. The seven miles of road from this point to Shahzadi were very pretty. The river ran under trees, and the defile was bounded by mountains no longer rising sheer and bare, but sloping gently back in forest-clad hollows and rounded heights. Wild figs overhung the road, fair to look upon but tasteless, and we gathered blackberries and admired the wax-like scarlet of the wild pomegranate flower. Shahzadi on the road is a mere wayside booth where barley and chaff are sold, and further on there is a poor caravansarai, much out of repair; but the village stands on a hill-top 500 feet above the road and a mile back from it. We did not go there, but saw some of its stone-built shingle-roofed houses through the mist, looking for all the world like a glimpse caught of the servants' houses at the back of somebody's residence in Simla or Naini Tal, as the visitor rides by on the road beneath in the rains. We halted first at the booth, and then, dreading rain and wanting

shelter, we went on to the caravansarai and slept there. The dew was too heavy for sleeping outside, and the mosquitoes inside were numerous; nevertheless, I had a good night, though poor Sayyid Ali enjoyed but little rest.

*9th August, Shahzadi to Amol, 5 farsakhs; 6.30 a.m. to noon.*—Our march to Amol was the loveliest I made in Persia; but indeed one could hardly believe that this was Persian scenery, with its forest paths and meadow glades and broad river bordered by tall and leafy growth of oaks. I thought of the leagues of brown or black desert, the bare saw-ridges, the salt hills white and crimson and green, the dry clear air, and the bold and sharply-defined forms and colours that I had seen and stored away in memory during my wanderings in Persia until now; but here was an atmosphere laden with soft invisible vapour, and all the shapes of mountain and valley were rounded or clothed with vegetation hiding the bare outlines of the rock, and all the colours were the blue and white of the cloud-flecked sky above, and varied shades of green all around us. The path by which we went was overhung with ivy, briar, and wild vine, and bordered with ferns in unimaginable profusion, and over-

shadowed by oak (the holm oak of the Himalayas) and elm, beech, plane, sycamore and lilac and fig trees, while pomegranate and coriander bushes formed a thick undergrowth. In the mid-forest we entered a region of horse-flies, and were persecuted for two hours. The mules paid little attention to them, but our horses were grievously plagued, being stung into a state of perpetual restlessness, and bleeding freely from punctures on the chest, hips, and under the ribs. The valley went on broadening into river-meadows, and at length opened clear of the hills, and we emerged into the plain of Mazandaran. Here the road, which had long been growing worse and worse, degenerated into the common mule track of the country. We had passed through a good deal of mud in the forest, but the open plain was more sandy, and its hillocks overgrown with bent grass and bracken reminded one of sand hills along the Antrim coast. The air was laden with moisture, and warm, but not nearly so warm as that of upper India in the rains. The luxuriance of vegetation was as great as anything I have seen in India. We rode on, looking for Amol, and discovered it hidden in trees and tall weeds. The Governor placed a



good two-storied house at our disposal. Its tiled roof and brick wall enclosing a grassy compound recalled the familiar police station or dispensary of a small country town in India. Here we halted one day.

*10th August, Halt at Amol.*—The population of Amol may amount to 8000 souls, but it is difficult to estimate, for two reasons ; first, that most of the people were spending this the unhealthy season of the year in villages up in the mountains, and second, that the town itself is so overgrown with jungle and so scattered among trees that no collective view can be obtained of it as a whole. The streets are paved with cobble stones, not because Amol is particularly enlightened or in advance of the rest of Persia, but simply to prevent them from becoming utterly impassable in wet weather. Maidenhair fern grows profusely in the drains that run down their centre, and the suburban paths are overshadowed with gigantic umbelliferous weeds nine feet high, which prevent all circulation of air, and keep up a disagreeable closeness and heat. Here is an old mosque, in which the Imam Husain is said to have read prayers. That tradition is obviously absurd, but the building has survived two inundations

which destroyed the town, and it is doubtless some centuries old. It is of brick, with a tower thirty feet high, in a style not unlike the Italian, and with a tiled cupola at the top. Conventional designs are wrought in coloured bricks on the walls. Four tombs of saints stand near it, only one of which retains its conical roof. My guide in Amol could tell me nothing about these tombs ; the saints buried in them had long been forgotten ; only the name of one tomb remained, Sayyid-i-Sihtan (showing that three descendants of the Prophet were buried there), and of another, Shams-i-Al-i Rasul, or the Sun of the Prophet's lineage. There is a river wall north of the town, eight feet high and four thick, built by a prime minister of Persia forty years ago. The bridge across the Harâs at Amol is eighty yards long and very narrow, evidently an old work. It is solidly built of stone. The story is, that the river washed all bridges away, till an Imam came here and laid the foundations, 700 years ago.

11th August, *Amol to Bârfarush*, 6 *farsakhs* ; 7 a.m. to 2 p.m.—We marched to Bârfarush next day by a road very muddy in parts, continually crossed by water-courses, and frequently blocked by fields of rice carefully sur-

rounded with palings of thorn-topped ditches, obliging us to turn aside and march round somehow. I saw some very fine elms and sycamores by the way. The country was well wooded, well watered, and covered with a most lush and luxuriant vegetation—briars, ferns, umbelliferous weeds, wild vines, wild cotton, and tall feathery grass. I saw a small kingfisher, an Indian jay, a flycatcher like that of India but much larger, and many magpies. The day was cloudy and cool. Numerous groves to right and left indicated the sites of villages, but houses could very rarely be seen amid the thick jungle. Outside Bârfarush we crossed the Bârfarush river by a bridge 100 yards long, stone-built, narrow, and thirty feet above the water. Our road had been following the river for ten miles. We went to the Shah's garden-house in Bârfarush. It is in an orange-garden surrounded by a tank overgrown with white water-lilies. A wooden bridge sixty yards long affords access to the island, but the planks are so loose and rotten that we could not take the mules across, so we unloaded on this side and carried the baggage over. We found spacious rooms in the house, and slept well. I woke once in the night and

heard a dull noise like the sougning of wind, but wind there was none. We heard it again in the morning, before the sounds of day broke in and drowned it.

Bârfarush is spoken of in Persian travels of recent date, as having a population of 30,000. I went through its bazars, and they did not seem to me larger than would suffice for a population of half that number. Possibly the Rasht route has engrossed the Caspian trade, and Bârfarush has declined; but if so, why make a new and excellent road from Teheran through the mountains to Amol? Perhaps I was deceived by the empty state of the town in this feverish season of the year. Both here and in Amol I heard plentiful complaints of fever, and all my servants began to suffer from it as soon as we entered Mazandaran. Sayyid Ali escaped by virtue of a strong constitution, and I by precautionary pills of quinine. Certainly the streets of Bârfarush were half empty, and many of the houses were locked up in their owners' absence among the hills. The bazar presented a curious appearance. It is built of wood, and the unplanked beams of the roofing, and the spars sticking out of the unfinished roofs of houses, gave it the look of a

shipyard in disorder. I met a Persian here who had been in Vienna, and whose brother was there still, with two partners in the indigo business. I was not able to get any definite intelligence regarding the day on which the Caspian steamer called at Mashhad-i-Sar, but on the whole it seemed that I should reach that place a day before her; and this proved to be right.

12th August, *Bârfarush* to *Mashhad-i-Sar*, 4 *farsakhs*; 7.30 a.m. to noon.—My last march in Persia was begun in rain, but ended auspiciously enough. The road is dry and good. Half-way, we passed through the large village of Amîr Kulah (this word *kulah* is a common appendage of the names of villages in these parts; it means *hat*, and may have some reference to the tiled roofs of the villages), where a fair was about to begin. Sayyid Ali bought five chickens for a kran, and some good bread. As we advanced, we became assured that the noise we had heard by night was the moaning of the Caspian; and when, winding our way through jungle, we threaded the outskirts of Mashhad-i-Sar, and gained sight of the sea, we found the coast line white with surf. A customs-house stands on the shore. I found

a good upper room there, and hastened to call upon the Russian agent of the "Caucasus and Mercury" steamers, who lived on the opposite side of the courtyard. He told me the steamer from Ashurada would call next day, but that I could not get out unless the surf went down. I took my passage, and hoped for the best. In the evening I was visited by the Governor, a stout Persian gentleman of very pleasant address, who had been to Europe with the Shah, and spoke regretfully of Paris and London, especially of the latter.

13th August, *Embarked on steamer for Astrachan.*—Mashhad-i-Sar has no kind of harbour. The river is large enough to be navigable for at least a few miles above its mouth, if the bar were cut through and the channel deepened by dredging. But as it is, only small flat-bottomed craft can come in. The "Caucasus and Mercury" steamers draw only  $8\frac{1}{2}$  feet of water, yet they cannot venture within two miles of the shore. As for the Caspian, it looks like the meanest sea in the world. The coast here, as far as one can see, is a line of low sandhills overlooking a steep and narrow beach of dark-grey sand. There are no shells on the shore, no birds in the air,

no seaweed, no fish, nothing but green water-snakes, tortoises, and frogs. A schooner was rocking at anchor in the offing. A lighthouse, without any light, stood on the highest sand-hill near Mashhad-i-Sar. I went to the lighthouse with a volume of Shelley, to read and look over the sea. The first thing I saw on reaching the top was a line of smoke on the horizon, and my glass immediately showed me the steamer making her way hither. Having no further necessity for Shelley, I abandoned him in the lighthouse, went back to the custom-house, and packed my goods. By five o'clock in the afternoon I was on board the "Czarevitz Alexandr." I was very sorry to part with Sayyid Ali. The tears were in his eyes as he bade me good-bye on the shore. I had known him five years, and had always found him a pleasant companion. In our wanderings together through Persia he had cheered the rough road with serious or witty conversation, and in finding me entertainment and lodging, and introduction to governors and such folk, he was simply invaluable. May good luck follow him in his new career in his own country!

## CHAPTER IX.

## UP THE CASPIAN AND HOME.

THE Caspian is often called a Russian lake; but the map shows Persian territory extending along the whole southern coast, and one imagines that Persian trade must figure on the sea to some extent; considering, moreover, that this southern submontane strip is by far the richest part of the Caspian shores. But indeed a week's voyage effectually dissipates such notions, and helps to explain the predominance of Russian influence in the councils of the Shah. It is hardly too much to say that there is not one Persian sail on the sea of their prophet Khizr. A few fishing-boats potter about the mouths of the rivers; but the coasting trade with native craft rests in the hands of the Tartars of the Russian seaboard; whereas the villages of the Persian coast are actually built at a distance from the sea—proof



positive that the people have little taste for sailing.

The "Caucasus and Mercury" steamers run round the Caspian, calling at nine ports. The steamer that goes round from west to east calls at Mashhad-i-Sar every Tuesday; the steamer that goes round the other way calls every Saturday. I came in for the Saturday steamer. Had I waited, as I was tempted to do, till the Tuesday following, I might have seen the Russian naval station of Ashurada (which the Persians call Gaz, and which is the port of Astrabad), and also Chikishliar and Krasnovodsk. But I confess that I failed in self-denial and resolution to abide in Mashhad-i-Sar and take my chance; and, as it happened, the chance was a slender one, for the Tuesday steamer must have arrived opposite Mashhad-i-Sar about midnight, and probably did not take the trouble to stop. I met a Turk in Mashhad-i-Sar who had carried a venture of stores from Bârfarush to the Russian camp at Chikishliar during the late campaign against the Akhal Tekes, and had found the market good, and continued dealing there for six months. The people about the customs-house declared that the Russian forces had been largely provisioned

from Mazandaran. Cattle and rice were sent round in country boats. Certainly Mazandaran could furnish plenty of both. In our three days' march across the country we had seen excellent cattle, a most pleasing contrast to the starved beasts of India and to the still smaller and leaner black kine of southern and central Persia; and as for rice, the only limit to its growth seemed to be want of population. Chikishliar is no more a harbour than Mashhad-i-Sar. I could imagine what sort of a place it is very well, by combining the sandhills and black foreshore of Mashhad-i-Sar with my memories of Persian deserts as a background. Krasnovodsk is a good natural harbour, but the Michaelofski bay, from the head of which starts the Kizil Arvat railway, is noways suited for navigation, being long and extremely shallow, not deeper, indeed, than four feet for the most part. It is also so salt that fish cannot live in it.

*14th August.*—These scraps of information I picked up at Mashhad-i-Sar and on board the "Czarevitz Alexandr." We hoisted anchor at eleven at night. Next morning the Persian coast was six or seven miles' distant on our left; we were moving parallel to it. Some of

the officers were looking out for Damavand, which they assured me could be plainly seen even from Chikishliar in clear weather. We reached Enzeli in the afternoon. Though the Caspian is said to attain a depth of 400 fathoms in places, yet it has only three harbours where a steamer can come close in shore. These are the natural harbours of Baku and Krasnovodsk, and the artificial port of Petrofski. I had, therefore, to contemplate Enzeli from a distance of two miles odd. So thick is the vegetation, that even with a glass one fails to make out the mouth of the lagoon which here extends inland from the sea, and is fished over by a Russian company who rent the water from the Shah, and sell the fish to the Persians. Some white sails, stealing out under the trees, like the "merry Grecian coaster" of Mr. Matthew Arnold's beautiful poem, showed where the green fringe of reeds was broken by the tide. A little further seaward lay a white steamer, the Shah's yacht, rusting in idleness. A mosque with tiled roof and tower, in the Mazandaran style, stood between thatched houses half hidden in the trees; the long low wall of a caravansarai, a white balcony or two further inland, and a few boats hauled up on the beach—

such was Enzeli, the greatest Persian port on the Caspian.

15th August. — After this comes Astara, distant twelve hours, where the Russian and Persian frontiers meet. This is a place of exceeding insignificance, yet it may be called the port of Tabriz. A tiny river parts a poor Persian village from a group of wooden houses surrounding the Russian customs-house and barracks. Four hours farther along the coast is a Russian military station of some size, viz. Lenkoran, where I ventured ashore, and found it a pretty place. Its avenues and groves reminded me of a small Indian station—Shah-jahanpur, for instance—but the houses are of wood, and much smaller than Indian bungalows, while their curtained windows and street doors garnished with knockers testify to the beginning of Europe. Here, among other passengers, a Russian colonel and his wife came on board, bound for Baku. Observing that the lady was reading a novel of Miss Rhoda Broughton's, I ventured to ask her if she spoke English, and was rewarded by a pleasant conversation. It appeared that there was an English lady in Lenkoran, the bride of a Russian officer, and she had taught my fair fellow-passenger to

speaking our language very well. Lenkoran is a favourite station, and is often preferred to the dust and heat of more social and populous Baku, whither our new passenger was bound on transfer with her husband; but she meant to spend the summer in St. Petersburg. This last touch seemed to me very like one's Indian experiences, and the relations between the Russians and the so-called Tartar population help the analogy out. Their Urdu is Turki—a language spoken more uniformly than I had imagined; for a man can get on with it from Teheran to the Caucasus, all round the Caspian, and throughout the Turkoman country. It has the same kind of currency in these parts as Hindustani in upper India; that is to say, the governing race use it in their intercourse with the governed. I was assured by a Russian officer that the language of the Teke Turkomans was practically the same as that of the Tartars of Daghistan in the Caucasus; and that this latter is the same as the Turki of Teheran and Tabriz, I had a proof in the fact that a Greek gentleman from Tabriz, whom I met later on, was perfectly well able to understand the speech of the Tartar boatmen.

*16th August.*—We reached Baku on the third

day of our voyage. The town was Persian fifty years ago, and if it were Persian to this day it would not differ from what it was then—a walled village perched on a hill, overlooking a harbour occupied by half-a-dozen small coasting and fishing craft. One can trace the old walls still, and a quaint old tower of stone stands up in the midst and is called, of course, the Qalah-i-Dukhtar or Maiden's Fort; but the Russian town has far outgrown their limits. Baku is a decidedly go-ahead sort of place, and its people have an immense belief in its future prosperity. They boast a local paper, the *Bakinskia Izvestia*, whence I gathered some news. The municipal income is raised by a house and property tax, which is being spent at present, among other things, in building a handsome sea-wall of freestone along the face of the town—a work which will give Baku an elegant mall, between rows of good shops on one side, and the sea on the other. But the municipality ought to pay some attention to their streets, which, though broad enough and tolerably clean, are atrociously paved. The buildings are large stone houses of two and three stories, with European shop-fronts. The out-turn of the naphtha springs, upon which

Baku entirely depends, was about a million *puds* last year, say 160,000 tons, and is increasing yearly. Difficulties of transport hinder the development of the trade to a certain extent, but these will be largely surmounted if the American plan be adopted of solidifying the naphtha and transporting it in that form. Moreover, the Tiflis and Baku railway is to be opened in 1882. Part of the line was already open while I was in Baku, but work had been temporarily stopped by a quarrel between the Sunni Tartars of the villages along the line and the Shiah navvies who had been hired from Persia to make it. Some real or pretended trespassing of cattle from the villages had been erected into a *casus belli*, the result being seventeen men killed and wounded, and the flight of the navvies. At present, the naphtha is transported chiefly by water. A hundred and fifty vessels lie in the harbour, mostly schooners of ninety to 200 tons, but some three-masted schooners run up to 600 tons. About thirty steamers belong to the port, the largest being of 1000 tons burden. Two miles north-east of Baku is the Tcherni Gorodok or Black Town, which is given up to factories. It is named from the smoke that hangs over it like

a pall, and is one of the dirtiest and most evil-smelling places I have ever seen. Naphtha, no more than pitch, can be handled without defilement; nevertheless, like that Roman article of revenue, the money raised from it *non olet*; and nobody can spend half an hour in Baku without seeing that it is a very rich and flourishing place.

I envied it for India; we have very few such towns there. Not that the striking of oil is always the making of a fortune. Outside the bay is an island which presents to the sea a dismal range of deserted factories. A company struck ozokerit here, and worked prosperously till 90,000 *puds* (1500 tons) had been extracted, when the mine gave out, and the company burst up. They say there is ozokerit on Cheleken island, outside Krasnovodsk. If this be so, the smoke of factories will be seen ere long from the Turkoman desert.

Half an hour's drive south-east of Baku are the Government dockyards and barracks, with a large military church. These are all good buildings, and are kept neat and clean. Three Government steamers of some 300 tons each were lying in the docks, and an iron schooner was riding in the harbour by way of guardship.



She looked untidy enough, and her crew rowed very clumsily.

Trees are the things most to be desired in Baku. The vegetation of the place is pretty well confined to the public garden. Bare brown hills hem in the semicircle of the bay. It was strange to look upon genuine Persian scenery once more, after the green shores of Mazandaran. The situation of the town, at the foot of these eastward-looking hills of baked rock, is admirably adapted for catching and storing up heat, and the dust in a high wind is delightful. I went to the public gardens by night, heard the band, and looked on the motley crowd of promenaders. I suppose the thermometer was standing at 87° Fahrenheit, or thereabouts. Next morning I had a pleasant swim in the Caspian, and did not get the naphtha rubbed off me for three days.

One duty I neglected. I did not go to see the ancient and legendary Hindoo who watches the sacred fire. Other travellers have interviewed him sufficiently.

*17th August.*—Derbend is twenty-two hours from Baku. Here the thickly-wooded country between the hills and the sea, which disappears on passing Lenkoran, comes to the front again

for the last time, and is a pleasing change after the bare brown hills of the Baku coast. But the mountains behind Derbend cannot compare with the huge masses, keeping their snow till August, which form the background to the coast at Mashhad-i-Sar and Enzeli, and part the plateau of Persia proper from the low-lying and luxuriant strip between their forest-clad spurs and the Caspian. The Derbend hills are low and but thinly wooded, more famous for vineyards than forests. Excellent wine is made here, and boats bring great clusters of grapes from the shore. The town itself is a quaint parallelogram of thickly packed houses, stretching up the side of a hill, and crowned by the white buildings of the Governor's residence, within the walls of the old Persian citadel. As in Baku, the Russian town has crept down to the shore, and contains some very good buildings. Northwards of Derbend, the pleasant vine-clad hills recede and disappear.

*18th August.*—Petrofski is a barren military station, nine hours from Derbend. We arrived there at night, when only ranges of lighted barracks were visible along the shore, and two breakwaters throwing arms out into the sea. The northern breakwater is a quarter of a mile

long, the southern three-quarters of a mile. The town is treeless and backed by brown rock, like Baku; according to the *Bakinskia Izvestia*, it is dirty, has no hotel, and no place of public resort; there is a kind of public garden, in a hopelessly languishing condition. The place is provisioned from Baku by contracts as per advertisement in the Baku News.

From Petrofski to the mouth of the Volga, a distance of eighteen hours, there is no port, and the low shore shows only fishing-villages at long intervals. The "Caucasus and Mercury" steamers can get no farther than the Nine Foot roadstead, opposite the Volga mouth. Long before reaching this, one notices the discoloration of the sea-water by the brown tide of the river. We arrived by night, so that I could form no estimate of the number of vessels in the roadstead, but the last three days had considerably raised my opinion of the Caspian as a sea for navigation. At Mashhad-i-Sar one is inclined to believe that the entire Caspian fleet consists of a schooner and three fishing-boats; but the forest of masts in Baku harbour conveys another impression, and a few hours' sail outside of Baku we passed through a crowd of

schooners and brigantines bound for that port under a fair wind—a pretty sight, with their white wings outspread.

19th August.—At Nine Foot we left the “Czarevitz Alexandr” for a saloon barge, in which we were to be towed up one of the channels of the delta as far as Astrachan. I had enjoyed a pleasant time on board the “Czarevitz Alexandr.” We had a calm sea all the way, and I managed to make some acquaintances among the ship’s officers. The chief engineer of the company, who is an Englishman, had come out with the steamer from Glasgow, where she was built, across Russia by river and canal. He brought her out in two pieces, no lock being long enough to take her as a whole. Two other officers spoke English very slightly, and I could understand a word here and there of their Russian. The captain was an officer of the Russian navy, and spoke French well. The food was excellent, and for drink there was beer or Derbent wine—the latter either white wine resembling hock, or red wine called Bordeaux, and both were as good as one could desire. We were a polyglot company. Two of the ship’s officers talked Swedish to each other; the engineer talked English to me, and Russian to everybody else;

a Russian colonel conversed with a merchant from Tabriz in Greek ; a couple of Tartar officers of irregular cavalry spoke to each other in Turki, and to me in Persian ; while various Armenian ladies and children chatted away in their own language. One Armenian gentleman amused me by going round the deck and conversing with everybody in turn in a different language ; but when he approached the two Greeks, he started, quailed, and falling back on me, asked in wonder what language of the earth *that* might be. Besides the Greek colonel, there was also another colonel in the Russian army who joined us at Baku. These two officers spoke French. The Greek was a colonel of the 21st regiment of infantry, which had taken a conspicuous part in the siege and storm of Geok Tepe, and is at present quartered in Astrabad. He had been decorated with the cross of St. George for his services in the campaign, and had been wounded in the final assault. The other officer had served in the operations against the Daghistan insurgents of 1877, and subsequently under General Tergukasoff in holding Ismail Pasha in check at Igdyr, and also in the advance on Erzeroum and the unsuccessful assault of that place under General Heimann.

They were different types of men; the former good-humouredly boastful, the latter modest and quiet, though politely ready to answer questions. The colonel from Astrabad talked Turki as an Anglo-Indian officer would talk Urdu. It must have been a material help to the Russians, this knowledge of the Tekke language by so many of their officers. Geok Tepe,<sup>1</sup> by the way, is pronounced Yok-Tepe (like the English word *yoke*). I was naturally curious to hear something about the campaign. If I give a brief account of my conversation with one of these Russian officers, I shall be following the example of more distinguished travellers, and perhaps the record may not be without interest.

“Do you know,” said the colonel, “that there were four English officers in Geok Tepe up to the night preceding the assault? They

<sup>1</sup> *Tepe* of course means a hill, and should be written *tapa* and pronounced *tuppa*. The word is common in certain districts of India (Jaunpur, Mirzapur, Gorakhpur, &c.), where it means a tract of villages. The converse change of meaning may be seen in the word *dih* in these same districts. This Persian word, meaning a village, has come to signify a hill or hillock, such as in the Indian plains mark the abandoned sites of old villages.

escaped to Mashhad, but we got some of their papers."

"That's hardly credible," I replied. "You must have been mistaken."

"Not in the least. We have their papers. It is certain that English officers aided the Turkomans. Why, there is a wall of the fortress, over against one of our batteries, which is called *the English wall* to this day."

"Had the Turkomans any guns?"

"One small piece, about five feet long. That was English too, but dated 1823, and captured, no doubt, from Persia."

"Was the fortress a strong one?"

"It was not a scientific fortress, and was built of mud; but it was by no means to be despised. The Tekkes fought very bravely. Your Afghans are nothing to them. We lost heavily in the assault. One of the companies of my battalion had fifty-five men placed *hors de combat* at the first discharge. The Tekkes were 45,000 men; we were 5000, and we lost 1200 in the siege and assault. We buried 14,000 Tekkes after the capture of the fortress."

"Four thousand?" I asked, somewhat aghast at these figures.

"No, fourteen thousand."

"You did not surround Geok-Tepe?"

"No, we only invested two sides. The Turkomans made three sorties, and seized some of our trenches for a short time—half an hour or so."

"How did your soldiers stand the work—in tents, in the winter months?"

"It was not very cold. We had no snow, and rain very rarely. The soldiers worked magnificently, and they were all young soldiers too. But the Russian soldier will achieve anything in obedience to orders; and our general is a thorough soldier himself. We would follow Skobeleff anywhere."

"Well, it's a far cry to India"—and I was going to say that the Turkomans were fairly out of our sphere, when the colonel interrupted me.

"Not so far, after all. Astrabad is only 40 versts from Mashhad, and 200 from Merv. We have crossed all the sands in our road already, and those which remain lie away to the left, while our route goes through Persian villages and a fertile country. Merv is practically Russian already. But we have plenty to do in that quarter yet, and what we all hope is



that we shall soon see General Skobeleff back again, when we can march to Herat. One campaign would do it."

I knew his distances were all wrong, but contented myself with remarking that Herat belonged to Afghanistan. To my surprise, this obvious proposition was vigorously denied.

"There is no ruler now in Afghanistan," said he, "and in any case it does not follow that Herat belongs to the Amir of Cabul. But you grudge us everything, and are always trying to do us harm."

"Well," I replied, "and do not you try to do us harm? You sent a colonel to Cabul, and he cost us twenty millions of money."

"That pays for the Crimean war only. We are deeply in your debt still; we owe you plenty for what you have done against us in Turkey and Turkistan. Yet it seems a pity that we can't be good neighbours, and have a common frontier. The Ganges, for example, would do well enough.

"No," said I, "the Ganges would not do, nor the Indus. But perhaps we might try the Oxus. And I don't think we are always trying to do you harm. There were plenty of Englishmen who wished you well very heartily through-

out the Turkish war. I drank a bottle of champagne in honour of the fall of Plevna."

"Nay, if you drink to Russian victories, you will have many a bottle of champagne to drink in the future. You and I will drink one together on the banks of the Ganges some day, when my battalion arrives there with General Skobelev. You see, our Turkistan is like so much dry bread, while India is as rich as butter, and we want some butter to make the dry bread go down pleasantly."

Thus he talked away, half in joke, half in earnest. Of course I attached extremely little value to the opinions of a man trained to mere fighting. His brother officer evidently thought him too boastful. I saw about fifty men of his battalion on board the steamer—fine, stalwart young fellows, well able to take care of themselves, and plainly innured to roughing it. They were decidedly dirty. The uniform consisted of a white cap with a leather shade, a white tunic with black leather waist-belt and red epaulettes, and blue trousers, tucked into excellent high boots. These boots must serve capitally for marching through sand. Both the officers told me stories of their personal experience of the Russian soldier's powers of

marching. A single march across the deep sands on the western side of the Akhal Tekke oasis amounted to forty versts, or twenty-five miles, and used to be gone through as a matter of course. The soldiers seem to be armed only with Krenk rifles.

One begins to understand, hereabouts, what a grip Russia has of the Turkoman country. Krasnovodsk is within a day's steam of Baku; the completion of the Tiflis railway will place the Caspian in immediate communication with Russia proper and all its resources; while at the other side is the railway from the head of Michaelofski bay to Qizil Arvat, and thence (soon to be completed) to Astrabad. The colonel described the Akhal Teke oasis as a well-watered and well-cultivated country, full of orchards and melon-gardens; but he acknowledged that Astrabad is quite incapable of supporting its garrison at present, and that the army has to be fed from Baku and Persia. I fancy it must be very much the same kind of country as one overlooks from the back of Shir Kuh, for instance; the long foot-slope of a mountain-range, sinking gently down into a clayey and stony plain; the slope fed with water from the mountains, the plain by qanats

that collect what filters through the slope; and as the plain stretches back from the foot of the acclivity, the waters fail and leave sandy or stony desert extending far and wide. Such a belt of cultivation may be found under the shadow of more than one range of Persian mountains, with the hills on one side, and the desert on the other. There are only two companies in Geok Tepe. In Astrabad there seem to be two infantry regiments, and two of Cossacks of the line.

*20th August.*—When I awoke the morning after leaving Nine Foot, we were making slow progress up one of the channels of the Volga delta. I suppose the largest channel has been selected for the passage of steamers, but it is no great size after all—about 300 yards broad, and seven or eight feet deep. On either side extend swamps overgrown with reeds, over whose tops can occasionally be seen the gleaming reach of some sister-channel, or distant sails in a sea of rushes show where a channel flows unseen. The round tents of Kalmuck fishermen stand on patches of firm ground, and as the barge moves higher up the river, Cossack villages come into view—irregular groups of wooden houses of a dull grey colour, with nets

drying in the foreground. Gradually the dry land gets the better of the swamps, and the villages grow larger, till at length every slight rise in the plain is crowned with houses clustered round a white church conspicuous from afar. And so the barge moves slowly through the day, unwinding the long meanders of the river, passing a village at every bend where a rising ground shunts the stream off at a new angle; and between the bends are long stretches of green reeds, or watery pastures fringed with willow. In the afternoon, one begins to look out for the first glimpse of the great church of Astrachan, and while watching it gradually gather shape, one becomes aware that the river has broadened, and that the barge has emerged from the delta-channel, and entered the main stream. The Volga is now seen in its true proportions; it is more than half a mile wide, and full of shipping. The town lies on both sides of the river, but principally on the left bank, that is, on the right-hand side as one comes up the stream. The main streets of Astrachan are wide and clean, paved with huge cobble-stones, and bordered by good substantial houses of brick, for the most part only two stories high, but large and solidly built. To

look at the shops, one might almost fancy oneself in an English provincial town. The women tie a handkerchief round their head, instead of hat or bonnet. It is not an unbecoming head-dress for such faces as seem to be commonest here—faces with a kind of mild and quiet expression, indicating rather gentleness than force of character. Except the streets, with their mixed population, and the public gardens, where the band plays and all Astrachan promenades till nearly midnight, there is little to be seen in Astrachan. The great church is said to be three hundred years old. It is a tall tower on a mound; the interior, excluding an inner room shut off by silver doors, and appropriated to the priests, is about seventy feet square and forty-three feet high. Four large pillars support the roof; there is no furniture of any kind, and the congregation stand. I went there on a Sunday, and admired the devotion of the congregation, the gorgeous robes of the priests, and the bright colours of the eastern wall. The whole space of this wall, about sixty feet by forty, is covered with pictures of apostles and saints, framed in bright brass-work, richly moulded. The general effect is striking in the extreme, and if one looks at

the paintings in detail, they are not despicable; indeed, the face of one Madonna haunted me for some time with its look of celestial calmness and dignity. Two or three brass shrines stand in the middle of the church; one of these bears an inscription to the effect that it has been erected by the Working Men's Association of Astrachan, to commemorate the preservation of the Czar's life from the act of attempted assassination on the 19th November (1st December), 1879.

From Astrachan to Nijni Novgorod is six days' journey. The steamers on this part of the river are very large and comfortable, and one sees plenty of Russian society in the saloon—officers who are always in uniform, and ladies who smoke cigarettes and play the piano marvellously well. It is a pleasant trip, though one cannot call the scenery picturesque. The banks of the river are nowhere mountainous, but pleasant glimpses can be had of a green undulating country, dotted with villages and woods. I must confess I was astonished at the magnitude of the river, perhaps the more so because the delta channels were smaller than my expectation. After steaming up the Volga for a week, I still found it broader than the Ganges at Benares. Soundings were occasionally taken with a pole, as on the Indus; I

never heard less than eight feet called. It is a huge river, and the Russians are proud of it with good reason. The large steamers cannot go beyond Nijni, but smaller boats run as far as Tver. The great fair of Nijni was in full swing when I passed through that town, but it has few attractions for the traveller. It is a place for merchants and men of business. One looks in vain for anything like "the fun of the fair" in these ranges of wide streets lined with shops. They are shops, not booths; and in fact the fair is a town—a regular town of brick and stone, which is inhabited for four months, and locked up and deserted for the rest of the year. Everything is dear while the fair lasts, and the hotels are crowded incredibly. If one chooses to devote a day to marching up and down the long streets, a certain degree of wonder and amusement can be extracted from the uniformity of the wares in each street. A Finn whom I met in Astrachan insisted upon this point as the peculiar characteristic and glory of the fair. "Then there is a street of samovars," said he, "from the size of a teacup to the size of a tub; O Lord, what a street of samovars!" I missed this street somehow. From the gardens of the Imperial Guard on the high bank above Nijni proper, one gets a good



view of the Nijni itself, and of the fair on the farther side of the Oka, which joins the Volga just below the town.

From Nijni I went by rail to Moscow, and thence to Warsaw. I have no intention of attempting to describe a route so well known; and it would be mere temerity to offer any opinion upon the Russian people after only a fortnight's experience. But first impressions have this much of value, that they represent whatever is most dissimilar to the habits or previous conceptions of the observer, and for this reason it may be worth while to mention three points which struck me most in Russia. One was a general untidiness and absence of home comforts. An elegantly or even comfortably furnished house seems to be the greatest rarity, and as for the hotels, they are all desolation and bareness. One sits down to dinner in a huge room with a bare floor like a desert, and bare walls, and not a newspaper to be had for love or money. The next table is occupied by half-a-dozen big bearded fellows, in clothes which have not been brushed or changed since they left the tailor's hands, and great boots innocent of blacking. The men do not wash; nor, indeed, the ladies either. I had many an unsought opportunity of forming

an opinion upon this point during a week on board the Volga steamer; and I must confess that even a pretty girl loses something of her attractiveness when she allows her fair throat and neck to become dingy for want of soap and water. Arrangements for washing on board the Caspian and Volga steamers are pretty well as good as none; nor is there any linen to the berths, nor to the beds in the hotels, as far at least as Nijni. These deficiencies, however, are not peculiar to Russia. It is more pleasant to recall the courtesy and kindness of the people, and the impression which even a casual traveller cannot fail to receive of the unity and greatness of the nation. One reads so much of the imminence of a political explosion which shall blow Russia into fragmentary states; and yet nothing strikes the traveller more in Russia than the solidarity of the national life. As for Russia being half-Oriental, or, indeed, more barbarous than Turkey, and so on, that may be true in some metaphorical sense, but anybody who travels out of a real Eastern country into Russian territory has abundant reason to rejoice at its untruth literally.

From Warsaw I went on to Berlin, and home *via* Ostend, reaching London on September 8, seven months after sailing from Karachi.

## CHAPTER X.

## GEOGRAPHICAL.

THE map to which reference is made in this chapter is the large map of Persia published in six sheets by the Surveyor-General of India, from details furnished mainly (I believe) by Colonel St. John, in 1877 or 1878. It is of great general accuracy, but has too many blank spaces. Some of these I think I have been able to fill up.

The route by which we marched from Shiraz to Firuzabad follows the length of the Shiraz plain in an almost southerly direction as far as the gardana or low pass of Baba Haji, which separates the Shiraz plain from that of Kavâr. East of the road are the Mahalu mountains, so called from the village on their farther side; to the west is the high range of Siyâkh. Soon after crossing the gardana, the village of Bâghanâr is passed on the right; a farsakh from the gardana, Fathabad is passed on the

right; and Kavâr is two farsakhs farther. A farsakh east of Kavâr is Burâki. The Qara Agâch comes out on the Kavâr plain between the Siyâkh and the Safiddâr ranges. The road crosses the Safiddâr range by the Gur Bahman pass, and descends upon the small table-land called Dasht-i-Muak; thence descends through the Tang-i-Zanjiran into the plain of Khwâji, leaving Zanjiran on the right on emerging from the defile. Jawakân is on the road, and the double village of Khwâji is to the right of the road, a farsakh farther. Babariyan is at the northern end of the plain. The western mountains are not called Kuh-i-Bûng, so far as I could discover, but Kuh-i-Surkh. From the Khwâji plain to Firuzabad, the road passes through the rocky range of Par-i-Kard by the Tang-i-Halaiki, and in a farsakh more reaches the Tang-i-Firuzabad, or takes the alternative route over the mountains. The mountains to the north-west of the pass are called those of Qala-i-Suhrâb; those to the south-east are the Kuh-i-Pîdanû. On the northern side of the Qala-i-Suhrâb range is the village of Siruzakun; on the northern side of Pîdanû is Sahra Safid. There is a mistake in the map here; the long river marked under Maiman has no existence;

only an insignificant stream comes into the Firuzabad river from this side.

The route we followed from Firuzabad to Lar was a different one from that marked on the map. The range to the south-west of the Firuzabad plain is called Barhamza; that to the south is Rushanu. South of this again is the high range of Aigar, between which and its eastern extension called Chahâwa, by the Tang-i-Ruh, runs the road to Babonej as marked on the map. South of Babonej again is a range called Sirma, not seen by me. Between Barhamza and Rushanu is the district of Rudbar, with its village three farsakhs from Firuzabad. Our road went to Tihdasht, thence along the southern slope of the Rushanu hills, and down a narrow and broken plateau, between low rocky ranges running north-west and south-east; in the south-eastern end of this plateau, where it narrows to a ravine, are the villages of Raikân and Shâludân. From Shâludân the road ascends the pass of Gul-i-Mushk, and descends on Kîr.

North of Kîr is the district of Sîmâkun, marked Akun on the map. The route to Jahrum from Firuzabad crosses the Pîdanû range to Sahra Safid village, thence two far-

sakhs to Maiman, and five more to Ispal. So far the country is a long table-land in the hills; from above Ispal the road descends on the valley of the Qara Agach, passes Tuzun west of the river, and enters the Sîmâkun plain, passing the following villages at less than a farsakh distant from each other:—Châkun, Kushk, Zâgh, Qala Quli, and Akun itself.

Crossing the Kîr plain, the Qara Agach runs southwards through a break in the Kuh-i-Jaala, which form the southern boundary of the plain, and past the following villages:—Nîmdeh  $\frac{1}{2}$  farsakh from the bridge, Abgarm (hot springs) 1 farsakh from Nîmdeh, Kirda  $1\frac{1}{2}$  farsakh, Maku  $1\frac{1}{2}$ , Lâghar  $\frac{1}{2}$  farsakh, Takhta 1 farsakh, Qala Shahzari 1 farsakh, Bakir 5 farsakhs: all, except Maku and Kirda, on the left bank.

The whole route from Kîr to Lar is in a south-easterly direction. After crossing the Qara Agach by the bridge called Pul-i-Arûs, it passes between two low ranges called Alaqân (north of the road) and Nadiri (south), and comes down upon the Harm plain, between the mountains called Ahlar (N.) and Yâsîn (S.). Under Ahlar are the villages Sargah, Ahmad, Mahmudi, and Châqun; under Yâsîn are

Harm and Kâryûn. There is a road from Sargah which joins the Jahrum-Lar road at Banaru, as follows:—Sargah to Balgun 2 farsakhs, Lagharun 1 farsakh, Dehfish 2, Banaru 2. From Kâryûn to Lar the road runs between low parallel ranges of hills, all having the north-west and south-easterly direction. The plain of Bidshahr is followed by the narrower plain of Iwaz, and that by the plain of Lar. Bidshahr is farther to the south-east than it is marked in the map. The ranges on the north-east of the road are called Khur and Mahruzi; those on the south-west are Kurzud and Darbast. Behind Darbast are the villages of Khunj, Bâghur, and Fishwar.

The plain in which Lar is situated is long and narrow, and by no means remarkably fertile. Probably the city owes its ancient importance to the fact that it is the nearest town to the ports of Bandar Abbas, Tahiri, and Linga. Routes are as follows:—

	Farsakhs.
<i>To Linga.</i> Nima via Sinakhud . . .	3
Ormud . . .	3
Anwi . . .	5
Shaikh Huzur . . .	3
Tang-i-Shuwir . . .	2
Bastak . . .	2
Hirang . . .	2

	Farsakhs.
This portion of the road is said to be mountainous.	Bunâgâchi . . . 4
	Birka-i-Din . . . 2
	Abdun o Kunar . . . 2
	Bunachampa . . . 3
	Champa . . . 2
	Linga . . . 5
<i>To Bandar Abbas.</i>	Tanginao . . . 3
	Bâdini . . . 4
	Hormuz Mirkhu . . . 4
	Sari Tang (Car) . . . 4
	Jaikun . . . 4
	Birka-i-Nau . . . 3
	Kijdari . . . 3
	Kauristan . . . 4
	Latitun . . . 4
	Gachi . . . 2
	Khan i Surkh . . . 4
	Bandar Abbas . . . 3
<i>To Tahiri.</i>	Ormud to Zaur . . . 1
	Deh Miyan . . . 1
	Sahra-i-Bagh . . . 2
	Madadeh . . . 6
	Fidâq . . . 5
	Bahra . . . 6
	Ala Mardasht . . . 6
	Galadâr . . . 5
	Tahiri . . . 6
<i>To Darab.</i>	Kurda . . . 3
	Diyâkun . . . 1
	Biris . . . 2
	Manturun . . . 3



		Farsakhs.
<i>To Darab.</i>	Yazdikhast . . .	3
	Duburun . . .	3
	Khusu . . .	4
	Darab . . .	5

Some villages in the environs of Lar have been filled in by me on the map.

For a general idea of the physical geography of this part of Persia, it may be said that the high mountains south of Shiraz cease in the neighbourhood of Firuzabad, and that south-eastwards from this point extend a number of smaller ranges, running parallel to each other in a north-west and south-easterly direction, and sinking lower as they go south-eastwards. Between Lar and the sea higher ranges intervene.

From Lar to Forg is marked "unexplored" in the map. The line drawn across this tract corresponds to the route we followed, but the stations (Khan-i-Marbut, Shahkir, and Qala Panjumi) are wrong. The route is really this:—From Lar past Tanginao, and thence northward to Kahna, 8 farsakhs; from Kahna westwards two miles, then north-eastwards to Shahghaib 7 farsakhs; then north-eastwards to Fadumi 9 farsakhs; thence eastwards and north-westwards to Forg 3 farsakhs. The whole tract is one of salt hills, salt streams, and salt plains or lakes in places. The mountain-ranges run

more nearly east and west, and are not of any great altitude; they are rocky, bare, and steep. The plateaux of this region have an elevation of about 2500 feet above the sea, and the mountains rise one to two thousand feet higher. Villages are rare. Between Shahghaib and Tarum are Bikhni (4 farsakhs) and Durz (3 farsakhs), whence 8 farsakhs to Tarum. There is another route from Kahna to Forg *via* Mazagun (8 farsakhs), whence 10 farsakhs to Forg, with the deserted village of Deh Miyan between.

Above Forg are high mountains on the north and north-east; the latter, which is called the Kuh-i-Sukhtak, retained a small patch of snow in the end of March, and must be 6000 feet high. After ascending into these mountains, the road turns eastwards and descends to within a farsakh of Gishkuh, then turns north-eastwards again and crosses the mountain-range west of the Kuh-i-Khabr; this range is here called the Kuh-i-Palangi, and farther west, where it turns northwards, it receives the name of Siyah Kuh. The place marked *Kom* between Aliabad and Abbasabad is really Puza-i-Khun, and is not a village, but merely a well and camping-place. The boundary of Fars, too, is marked wrongly; it ought to include Gishkuh. This region between Forg and Sir-

jan has a considerable elevation. The mountains of Bakir, 7 farsakhs west of Dehistan, were streaked with snow at the end of March, and must be 7000 feet high. Kuh-i-Khabr cannot be less than 12,000. The whole region is occupied by nomad tribes, villages being very rare. I have marked on the map such villages as I was able to ascertain. The drainage and fall of the region is south-easterly towards Tarum. Dates grow in the villages along the Dehistan river in this direction.

Between Sirjan and Rafsinjan the situation of Pârîz is wrongly marked, and has been corrected. I have marked a number of villages of the Sirjan plain, and corrected the position of Deh Ushturan. There is a road from God-i-Ahmar to Pa Qala, with Chabun at 4 farsakhs from God-i-Ahmar. The pass between Pârîz and God-i-Ahmar is probably 7000 feet high. The altitude of the Kuh-i-Tamar, east of Saidabad, has been calculated by Colonel Schindler to be 6600 feet.

Marching from Karman to Zarand, along the southern slopes of the range marked Nugât, the villages passed on the road are Sar Asiab 5 farsakhs, Hutk 1, Chatrut 1, Gurchu 2, Khanuk 1½. Other villages lie more immediately under the hills. From Zarand we

went behind the first line of the Nugat range to Tughraja, and thence to Kuhbanân. The map is wrong in showing Kuhbanân as an extensive tract of "fertile high lands." It is a small district in a plain not more than a farsakh square. The truth about the country to the north of the Nugat (or Hutkan) range seems to be this:—Towards the east the mountains admit no plains of considerable size, nor is there room for any *baluk* or group of villages, but a number of small separate hamlets are dotted along the narrow valleys of little streams; westwards, there is Tughraja, with the long plateau south of it containing Rizu and other villages; still further west is the small table-land of Kuhbanân, at about the same elevation as Karman. North of Kuhbanân the mountains rise to a considerable height, retaining some patches of snow in the latter end of April; probably they are 7000 feet high. From Kuhbanân westwards the elevation lessens. Taking Bafk as 3000, the elevation of Shaitur would be about 5000 feet. But the largest district behind the Nugat range is that of Râwar. The routes to it are as follows:—

## Farsakhs.

Karman to Sar Asiab	.	.	5
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	Farsakhs.
Hârus . . .	7
Ab-bid . . .	7
Hauz-i-Panj . . .	5
Râwar . . .	5
Kuhbanân to Fuz . . .	5
Tutk . . .	2
Tikadar . . .	2
Râwar . . .	3

Again, from Kuhbanân to Baghabad, the stages are Bidun 3 farsakhs, Bohru 4, Baghabad 4; and from Baghabad to Râwar the stages are Deh Askar 4 farsakhs, Gujar 7, Râwar 9 farsakhs. From Shaitur there is a route to Baghabad *viâ* Ratk  $1\frac{1}{2}$  farsakh, Khust 1, Bohru 2, Deh Mulla 1, Baghabad 3. Finally, from Baghabad to Sinjatk is 4 farsakhs, and thence to Bafk 10 farsakhs, a spring called Isfurdish intervening at 4 farsakhs from Sinjatk.

These places are not marked on the map, and yet Râwar is a district of some importance, producing silk and figs, while Baghabad is noted for its lead mines, sending 3000 shahi mans (about  $9\frac{1}{2}$  tons) of lead to Yazd annually.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The mine is in the side of a mountain seven farsakhs north-westward from Baghabad. A settlement of miners occupies part of the hill, and the smelting is done on the spot.

As for the physical geography of the region between Kuhbanân and Râwar, a river runs from Fuz to Gujar through a defile in which both these villages are situated, and loses itself in the *lut*. Fuz seems to be the watershed; the highest part of the mountains would thus be a line from Fuz to Bidun, some twenty-five miles back from their margin above the Zarand plain. Between Fuz and Gujar is the village of Tarz, in a long ravine; it has groves of walnut and mulberry trees and vine-trellises, like the villages of Shir Kuh. Gujar seems to be in the mouth of this gorge, above the foot-slope of the mountains northwards towards the *lut*. It has some ten villages dependent on it, upon the slope below. Râwar, Deh Askar, and Baghabad are said to be on the edge of the *lut*, where the mountain-region comes to an end, and the downward slope to the central desert begins. Thus the mountain-region behind the Zarand edge of the Nugat range is thirty to forty miles wide.

The villages of Shir Kuh have been marked by me on the map. From Yazd to Karman there are three routes besides that of Zarand, viz. the main road *viâ* Karmanshaban, Anar, &c., and a road on either side of it. That

on the north-eastern side goes from Fahraj to Girdakuh 6 farsakhs, thence to Bandarân 5 farsakhs, Gazu 7, Deh Khwaja 7; and this is the beginning of the Nukh district, with villages as follow:—Najmabad 3 farsakhs from Deh Khwaja, then Dughabad  $\frac{1}{2}$  farsakh, Zaghahabad 1, Bahramân 1, Tughari 5, Shamsabad 1; whence to Bahramabad is 6 farsakhs. The road on the south-western side goes up the table-land between the Daristan mountains and the south-eastern continuation of Shir Kuh. It is desert for the first half, with stages as follow:—Mahriz to Kalwand 5 farsakhs, Hauz-i-Qizâl tank 4; Deh Hajj 10 farsakhs of waterless road; Jawasp 6, Nâdik 3, Behnu 3, Shahr Babak 3. From Shams to Deh Hajj is 9 farsakhs, from Jawasp to Anar 7 farsakhs. The height of Shir Kuh must be little less than that of Chahar Gumbaz—say 13,000 feet.

There appears to be no road from Rafsinjan to Zarand across the Dawiran mountains. From Gazu there is a difficult footpath to Nahu, whence 9 farsakhs to Bafk; while from Nahu it is possible to march to Muraiya, across a waterless plain of clay and stones, with two tanks, viz. Hauz-i-Dumba-i-Rubah (foxtail) 3 farsakhs from Muraiya (or Maru), and Hauz-

i-Gaur at 3 farsakhs more, whence Nahu is a farsakh to the left, at the mouth of a gorge. It has sweet water, and a population of some ten families in prosperous times. It is nine farsakhs from Bafk. I believe this is the only village in the Dawiran mountains except Dawiran itself (with a few hamlets attached) in the highest or eastern extremity of the range above Kabutar Khan.

The two salt streams which make the Kavir of Bafk are those which we crossed in marching to Kuhbanân. The first is the Rashk river, with the following villages on it inside the mountains (beginning from the source):—Dasht-i-Khak, Hangirlu, Baba Abdân, Rashk, Hazargaz, Himmatabad, Najafabad (the two latter in the Zarand plain). The second or Tughraya river is smaller, and has on it Tughraya, Rizu (2 farsakhs), Khurramabad (1), Muhammadabad, Shabgira, Ahmadi, Kahnu, Sang, Sariz. Rizu and Khurramabad are in the plateau which extends below Tughraya inside and parallel to the first range of the Nugat mountains; the rest are in the gorge through which the river crosses this first range, or else in the Zarand plain. The main road from Zarand to Bafk goes past Gudrun. Above Gudrun, at 2 farsakhs, is a village called Shatkun in a



gorge of the Nugat range. As for the road from Bafk to Fahraj, the place marked Utakh Tavarlu should be Tabarkuh shelter-house; Khan-i-Panj also is only a shelter-house; Chahkavar is a large but untenanted caravansarai, with a brackish well, while Khan-i-Panj and Tabarkuh have only abambers to depend upon.

Remain the routes from Yazd across the desert to Fars. Those marked on the map are the Abarguh route and that from Sanîch *viâ* Mazra and Chah Osmanli to Bard-i-Shiraz. I was informed of two other routes,—one from Gâriz to Munidiân well (6 farsakhs), and to Bard-i-Shiraz (9 farsakhs); the other from Kalwand to Chah Mil (7 farsakhs) and Marwas (10 farsakhs); Marwas being 6 farsakhs east of Bard-i-Shiraz. There is a route from Marwas to Shahr-i-Bâbak, *viâ* Kharâvarjân 5 farsakhs, Chah Akh 5 farsakhs, Shahr-i-Bâbak 12 farsakhs.

From Yazd to Sâghand (wrongly marked Surkhân in the map) there is an alternative route *viâ* Chahkavar and Ariz, a village with palm-trees and brackish water, 13 farsakhs from Chahkavar and 12 from Bafk. Thence to Sâghand is 12 farsakhs.

Along the south-western side of the range which is marked as Kuh-i-Marwa on the map, and which culminates in Shir Kuh at its south-

eastern extremity, extends a line of villages by which one can travel from Yazd to Isfahan by the skirts of the desert which separates Iraq from Fars. The first of these is Nasrabad, 7 farsakhs from Taft; whence 8 farsakhs to Nidushân, then Surkh at 4 farsakhs, Yaghmish 7, Varzina 7. As the range runs north-westwards, it sinks greatly, and is less able to supply water. Surkh is a little hamlet; Yaghmish a mere tufangchis' fort. It is 9 farsakhs from Agda. Varzina is 7 farsakhs south of Tuhdashk, and can easily be seen from that place; it is at the end of the Zaindarud valley, where the river disappears in the Gavkhana. I have added to the map a number of villages which cover this valley all the way to Isfahan.

Zarda Kuh is not so near to Isfahan as it is shown on the map. And Chahar Mahal and Faraidan are further to the south-east. The four districts from which Chahar Mahal takes its name are Lar, Khiyâr, Mizak, and Gandamân. The route we followed led us through the first three in succession: Lar has Kavarukh, Deh Kurd, Chah Shutur, and other villages; Khiyâr has Sartishni, Dast-i-Na, Shalamzar, &c.; and Mizak has Junagân, Sarishgân, Farsun, and other villages, twelve altogether, in the small and fertile plain of Mizak. Gan-

damân lies on the farther or south-western side of Zarda Kuh, and beyond our route.

The Zaindarud takes a deeper dip southwards before entering Lahinjan. The Dima source of the river, which is the most considerable of all, has been traced by me on the map. For the rest, I have filled in the villages along our route. From Jamali I was informed of a route to Khurramabad with the following stages :—Boyun 8 farsakhs, Chaman-i-Sultan 5, Ali Godar 4, Sar Tawila 6, Darband 4, Hishmatabad 2, Râzun 9, Zâgha 5, Khurramabad 7. The last two stages are through country tenanted by nomads only.

The course of the Gulpaigan river as far as Qum seems to be correctly marked ; but the district of Mahallât is placed too far north. I have filled in the villages along this part of the route. The country is a salt mountain region, sinking through lower and lower ranges down to Qum.

The new road from Teheran to Mashhad-i-Sar has been added by me to the map, as also the names of a few villages along that road.

Zarda Kuh is the highest group of mountains in central Persia. Taking the snow-line at 13,000 feet in the end of June, the altitude of the highest peaks above the sea-level cannot well be less than 16,000 feet.

## CHAPTER XI.

NOTES ON THE LAND-REVENUE SYSTEM  
OF PARTS OF SOUTHERN AND CENTRAL  
PERSIA.

So far as I am aware, the only account existing of the land-revenue system of Persia is that chapter of Sir John Malcolm's History which professes to deal with this subject. Sir John Malcolm writes in general terms, and gives a wider view than that which comes within the range of my experience; nevertheless, my inquiries in many villages have yielded results which do admit of arrangement in something like a systematic form, though a considerable allowance must be made for unavoidable haste and inaccuracy. The tiller of the soil in any country is proverbially a creature that yields but little return to the most patient interrogation.

There are two great classes of land in Persia according to ownership, and two classes according to circumstances. Land may be the property of the State (*diwani*), or the property of

private owners (*arbâbi*). Arbabi land can be bought and sold like other property ; whether the State ever consents to sell the fee-simple of diwani lands to a private person, is a point on which I have not been able to get a satisfactory answer. But whether or not diwani land can become arbabi, there is a constant tendency of arbabi land to become diwani, by resumption of religious grants, by confiscation, and by escheat.

The second great division of land is into wet (*fâryâb*) and dry (*bakhsh* or *demi*). Wet lands are irrigated by well, river, spring, or qanat ; dry lands depend upon the rain from heaven.

In the southern districts, between the Persian Gulf and the altitude of Qazrân (2900 feet), the mountains are not high enough to collect moisture and store it in their gravelly foot-slopes, and irrigation from qanats is consequently unknown. There are wells in Burazjan, and the Khisht and Dalaki rivers water their respective districts. Date-groves are abundant, and contribute their share to the land-revenue. They are taxed at so much per tree. I was told in Dalaki that the just rate was half a qiran (5*d.*) per tree, but as for the actual rate, nobody seemed to know it or to care to state it. This is a difficulty constantly

met with in Persia; the cultivator is perhaps suspicious of his questioner, and evades a direct and definite answer, or he may be really incapable of apprehending any fixed principle at the bottom of a revenue demand which varies from year to year according to the temper or the circumstances of the man in power. One of the first points of inquiry which suggest themselves to an Indian officer is the existence of village records whereby the amount and distribution of the revenue demand can be judged; but nowhere in Persia have I met with or even heard of anything corresponding to the papers of the respectable Indian patwari. The same thing may be said of revision of assessment; it does not exist in Persia as a recognized institution. Forty or fifty years ago (so they told me in Burazjan), a record was drawn up showing the owners of dates and the number of trees owned by each. This record was said to be still extant in the possession of the Governor, but unrevised, while for all subsequent changes by death or transfer the Governor had to trust to the local knowledge of the kalantar. As for land yielding crops, the mode of taxation in these submontane and maritime villages is by the cow, that is to say, by the plough—a mode not unfamiliar in parts of India under

native rule. Ploughing is done with a single cow. The rate varies from 4 tomans to 16 tomans per cow (say from 16 rupees to 64), according to the quality of the land. The lands of a village are divided into various tracts (*sahrâ*), according to position and local advantages. Their relative fertility is well known. In the winter, when seed-time approaches, all the lands are divided among the number of ploughs which the village can muster. Each sahra is parcelled out into longitudinal strips, and to every plough is assigned a strip or strips in each sahra, so as to make the apportionment fair. This is a matter settled by the elders of the village, in conference with the plough-holders. In this description, a certain resemblance may be traced to the Bombay plan of dividing village lands into fields of arbitrary size, rated according to fertility, and leaving each cultivator free to take as many fields as he likes, and of whatever value he chooses. But it would be a mistake to press the resemblance between our highly-organized administration and such a very fortuitous government as that of Persia. The occasional taxes or reliefs (*imdadi*) vary with the endurance of the people and the exigency of the State. While I was travelling through Fars, the people were paying a relief imposed on account of the Kur-

dish invasion of Azarbaijan. The amount levied per head was variously stated, but the principle of the thing appeared to be a poll-tax according to worldly circumstance ; a man might have to pay only a qiran, or he might have to pay five tomans.

In Qazran I met for the first time with the rule which Sir John Malcolm states as of general application to dry lands—that the revenue demand is one-fifth of the produce. In a country like Persia, where land without water is of comparatively little value, dry land may be brought into cultivation by anybody who will take the trouble and risk of breaking it up and throwing seed into it on the chance of timely rain. I am not sure how far the ownership of a village carries with it the ownership of the dry lands within the village boundaries. Perhaps the general rule is that the dry lands are diwani even where the wet lands are arbabi. But in either case the cultivation of dry lands seems to be subject to the payment of a fixed proportion of the produce by the cultivator, whether he hold under the State or under a private proprietor. I believe that in the vast majority of cases, *rent* there is none ; the cultivator takes the trouble and risk as a matter of private speculation, and if he gets a crop, he



pays the fixed proportion of it to the State as a tax upon agriculture. If he gets no crop, he has nothing to pay. He is not assisted by the State or the arbab (if any) with advances of seed, but makes the venture entirely on his own responsibility. In Marvdasht, in the Shiraz and Kavar plains, in Jawakan and Firuzabad—all lying at an elevation of about 5000 feet—and even so low down as Kir, barely 3500 feet above the sea-level, the fixed proportion payable on dry lands is one-fifth of the produce, estimated on the threshing-floor. In the country between Kir and Lar, and between Lar and Forg, where the hills are too small to feed qanats, the main dependence of the cultivator is upon a rainfall which is more precarious than at the foot of the high ranges. Thus the dry harvest being more uncertain, while the wet area is at the same time more limited, for a well waters much less extensively than a qanat,—the result is a more moderate rate of taxation, and dry crops in these regions, accordingly, pay only one-tenth. In the plain west of Iwaz the rate is said to be one-hundredth only, but the plain lies at a considerable distance from human habitation, and that is the reason, no doubt, why ploughing is done with an ass, instead of the elsewhere universal cow; the cultivator

would waste half his day in driving his slow cattle to the field and back again. So much for dry lands, which need no division or apportionment; the wide sahra is before the cultivator, and if he chooses to take the risk, he may break up and sow any part of it, on the chance of a harvest.

The case of wet lands is very different. From Shiraz to Lar and Lar to Forg, wet lands are annually distributed among the plough-owning cultivators. They are measured out in strips, and then these strips are assigned to the cultivators by lot, or by mutual agreement. One would think that this business, upon which each man's fortune for the coming year depends, must be a very weighty one, and attended by quarrels; but I have always been assured that it is effected quietly and simply enough. In most villages the area to be divided is not very great, nor are the ploughs very numerous. The cultivator who takes wet lands pays two-thirds of the crop, *i. e.* one share for the land and one for the water, and retains one-third as his own share. His status may be that of a tenant holding under an arbab, or of a tenant of the State, or he may be a kind of under-proprietor. In Marvdasht, the Shiraz and Kavar plains, and

Firuzabad, the cultivators are mostly tenants of large non-resident arbabs. They pay two-thirds of the crop, or its equivalent in money, as happens to suit the arbab; and they receive some assistance from him in the matter of seed. Where irrigation depends upon a dam, as in Kavar, it is the arbab who finds the materials to repair the dam in case of need, but the villages furnish the labour. The distribution of the water is regulated by a *mîrâb* or water-captain, who is a servant of the arbab, and receives payment in grain from the villages. The arbab's bailiff is similarly paid, whose business it is to supervise the distribution of the produce. The respect and deference with which the Qavvam's bailiff was treated in Deh-i-Nau reminded me of the demeanour of Indian ryots towards the thanait of some wealthy land-owning money-lender. But this owning of whole tracts by great arbabs — such as the Qavvâm or the Mushir of Shiraz, or the Ilkhani of Firuzabad—is by no means the universal rule. There are villages, like Jawakan or Shaludan, which are the single property of one arbab resident or non-resident; and here the villagers have more independence, as being under a less formidable lord. The kadkhuda of Jawakan, who owned the vil-

lage, told me that the wet lands had been divided long ago (*az qadīm*), and were now held permanently by the ryots, each in his several share; when a man died, the land went to his heirs; when a family became extinct, a stranger was brought into the vacant place. Such rights of cultivators would not be saleable. The rate of payment in kind by these cultivators, moreover, was only one-half. The arable lands in the high plain of Dasht Arjun belong to the inhabitants of the village, the kadkhuda possessing peculiar lands like the *sir* of an Indian zamindar; there are more than a dozen sahras, each named after some local characteristic, and these are annually portioned out into strips and distributed among the ploughs of the village. In other villages, the division of wet lands does not take place yearly, but at the end of a short term of years. Kir seems to be diwani; the revenues of 1881 were farmed to a man of Kârzîn and a man of Jahrum, who collected two-thirds in kind from the cultivators as tenants of the State cultivating lands yearly redistributed.

Thus far I have spoken of the relation between the actual cultivator and the person entitled to claim a portion of the crop from him. There remains the relation between the arbab and the

State. The arbab has to pay a money-assessment to the local governor ; this assessment has developed itself out of the custom of bygone centuries, with such reductions as a famine would necessitate, and such amplifications as the exigency of the State may have prompted. A village, for example, may be assessed at 500 tomans land-revenue and 50 tomans' worth of gratuitous labour (*khidmatana*) ; in the course of years these two demands coalesce into one demand of 550 tomans as land-revenue, with 10 per cent. or 55 tomans extra as *khidmatana*. Some notion of the propriety of a periodical revision of assessment seems to hover in the minds of the people, but in a form entirely vague ; nobody could tell me anything about the latest revision (*jamabandi*), save in Kavar, where an intelligent young arbab remembered hearing it spoken of as a thing done fifty years ago. The assessments of individual villages are valueless towards estimating the general incidence of the land-revenue ; besides, it is next to impossible to ascertain what these assessments are, unless one had sight of the revenue-rolls in the Governor's office ; for a village is always spoken of with its *bulukât* or dependent villages and hamlets, and the number and extent of these are uncertain. A few instances may be

given, however, with the general remark that diwani villages seem to be more heavily assessed than arbabi; an arbab can make some kind of resistance, while a multitude of poor tenants can neither resist nor bribe effectually. Deh-i-Nau, in the Shiraz plain, pays 400 tomans a year; so does Fathabad in the Kavar plain; while Kavar itself, a much larger village than either of them, pays 120 tomans only, and forty kharwars of grain, the kharwar here being 100 Tabriz mans, worth about five tomans. Jawakan pays only 100 tomans, though considerably bigger than Deh-i-Nau; it lies higher, and the land is not so good. These figures have to be multiplied by four to give the equivalent in rupees; and when viewed in this way the assessments certainly seem heavy, for a Persian village is less populous than the average village of India, and nothing strikes one more than the smallness of its arable area as compared with the broad fields around an Indian village. Nevertheless, land must be a good investment, or it would not be so eagerly bought. One would not easily find a less flourishing village than Kahna on the edge of the salt hills, yet Lutf Ali Khan, who is a practical man, and may be supposed to know his own interest suf-

ficiently, bought Kahna lately for 200 tomans, built the fort for 250 tomans, and spent 1000 tomans besides in repairing the qanat. He is the sole arbab of the place, and the tenants are his creatures, receiving from him not only seed-corn, but also plough-cattle. The distribution of the produce, as explained by the ryots, is this :— Lutf Ali takes one-tenth for himself and one-tenth for seed-corn ; of the remaining four-fifths, one-half is Lutf Ali's on account of the cow, and the balance is divided in the usual ratio of one share for the land and one for the water, leaving one share as the ryot's own, or two-fifteenths. Sargah in the Harm plain is another instance of a village purchased recently for what seems a very high price. It is a wretched little place, yet a man was found who paid 700 tomans for it, with the prospective expense of putting the qanat in order. The total expenditure would not be less than ten years' purchase of the revenue demand. These are instances of single arbabs. Where arbabs are numerous, they have various plans for dividing the tenants' payments among themselves, whether by *sahâm*, viz., proportional fractions of an imaginary integer which represents the village, or by actual division of the lands, or by division of the

tenants. All these methods are familiar enough in India.

In the plains of Bidshahr, Iwaz, and Lar, where wells are used, the State takes *sarcharkhi* or wheeltax from each well. The mode of irrigation is by wheel and leathern bucket, hoisted by bullocks driven down a slope. The wells being deep, the pulley is elevated to a height of fifteen feet above the mouth, on an axle fixed in two tall pillars of mud; the slope is steep, and the number of bullocks per wheel is four. One such wheel in Bidshahr pays eight tomans, two wheels pay sixteen tomans, and so on. Wells are private property, even in *diwani* villages. Seven or eight years' tillage is said to exhaust the land about a well.

On rising from Forg into the high mountain country between that place and Sirjan, I met with a totally new method of assessment and distribution of the land revenue, namely, by reference to a *bunicha* or imaginary assessment, which, being multiplied by a certain figure, gives the real assessment of the village. The *bunicha* (or *foundation*) is usually stated in tomans, and the land-revenue is got by taking so many qirans per qiran, or so many *pul* per *pul*, or *shahi* per *shahi*. Thus in Kaha the bu-



nicha is five qirans, but the revenue demand is 300 pul per pul, that is to say, 300 qirans per qiran of the bunicha, i. e.  $5 \times 300 = 1500$  qirans or 150 tomans. In Birakun and Dehistan the rate is the same; in the mountain villages north of the Sirjan plateau it seems to be less, varying from 120 to 150 qirans per qiran of the bunicha; in the villages on the foot-slope of the range north of the Zarand plain—Sar Asiab, Khanuk, and Tughraja—the rate was said to be only 40 tomans per toman of the bunicha. Of course, if the bunicha be comparatively large—as in Sar Asiab, where it is 11 tomans—the revenue-demand might be considerable even at this rate. Tughraja, however, has a bunicha of only 4 tomans, though a large and flourishing village, and is decidedly under-assessed (by comparison with other villages) at 160 tomans only; but it is a community of Sayyids. All these mountain-villages thus assessed are arbabi, and the arbabs are resident and are themselves the tillers of the soil. In short, each village is owned by its inhabitants, who are also the cultivators of the soil. In some villages, the arbabs are as numerous as the sharers in any Thakur village of upper India. It is common enough to find 100 arbabs

in one village; and Chatrut, on the slope above the Zarand valley, has 700.

I sought in vain for any satisfactory traces of the village community as exemplified in India. It is certain that the population of a Persian village, if it be of any size, cannot be merely casual; indeed, the village has perhaps greater permanence in Persia than elsewhere, because in the general aridity of the country, village sites are marked out by nature, and a water-supply which supports a village now has probably served the same purpose for a thousand years. It follows that the *arbabs* must be related to each other, and in certain villages of *Sayyids* I have found their mutual relationship referred to a common ancestor; but even here the principle of joint and several responsibility for the land-revenue was unknown, while in villages of the ordinary type no tradition of a common ancestry was discoverable. So far as I have seen, each *arbab* seems to be responsible only for the revenue demand on his own piece of land, or that which corresponds to his own share in the village. One method of division is to take the six *dungas* into which everything, from a village to the world, is supposed to be divisible, and allow sixteen *habbas* to each *dunga*, thus mak-

ing ninety-six shares ; and an arbab may own a share, or a number of shares, or a fraction of a share. Another way is that which I met with in Sar Asiab, by dividing the bunicha. Of the six dungas, four are owned by Gabrs of Karman, one by another Karman man, half a dunga by the mujtahid of Karman, and the remaining half dunga by arbabs of the village, the kadkunda's share being 1 qiran 15 shahi. The bunicha is 11 tomans, and a dunga would thus be  $\frac{1}{6}$  tomans, or  $\frac{2200}{6}$  shahi ; the kadkunda's share is 35 shahi or  $\frac{35}{2200} = \frac{7}{440}$ ths of the whole. As a matter of fact, his lands are marked off, and so are those of the other sharers, and can be bought and sold according to their boundaries, while the revenue demand from each arbab is measured by that proportionate interest in the village to which his lands are supposed to correspond ; the kadkhuda would pay  $1\frac{3}{4}$  qirans  $\times 40$ , or 7 tomans a year. In some places the demarcation of separate lands for each arbab is a comparatively recent change ; and where there are several arbabs to a small fraction of a dunga, the division of the produce by proportional shares is often preferred to the division of the land, but in general the tendency evidently is to the apportionment of lands once

for all, after which the theory of shares falls out of sight as far as the land is concerned, though retaining its significance as regards the distribution of the water.

I never could get any one to tell me the origin of the bunicha. They believe it to date from immemorial antiquity, and to have remained unchanged to the present time. Unfortunately, the unchangeableness of the land-revenue demand by no means follows, for the Government has only to increase the rate per qiran or toman of the bunicha, in order to enhance the assessment; and by common testimony this has been done extensively—as in Dehistan, for instance, where the older men declared that they could remember the day when the rate was 100 qirans, instead of 300 qirans as at present, per qiran of the bunicha.

In a few villages I found diwani rights; the State may hold, suppose, two dungas of a village, and then it would take seven-tenths of the produce from its tenants on those two dungas. This proportion seems also to be the common one in Rafsinjan for under-tenants of the great non-resident arbabs. Such tenants usually get their seed from the arbab. In the plain of Sirjan, the proportion in some villages at least is con-

siderably higher; the Abbasabad tenants assured me that they paid five-sixths, receiving seed from the arbab, but ploughing with their own cattle. Under-tenants of small resident arbabs pay from 70 to 75 per cent. of the produce, or make a special written agreement.

It must be remembered that in the greater part of Persia, land without water is a possession of as questionable value as the sun-baked "south-land" given by Caleb to his daughter Achsah; and even as she prayed for springs of water, and got them for a possession, so water is valuable and heritable everywhere in the Iranian plateau. Hence after the division of the land among the arbabs, there follows the division of the water; and the two must correspond, so as to leave no patch of land without its due allowance of water. The plans for dividing the water are various. One of the simplest is to mark off the village lands into six parts corresponding to the six dungas, and to allow each part successively exclusive use of the water for one day, leaving the owners of land in each dunga to arrange among themselves for the distribution of the water within the dunga, according to their several *habbas* or shares. There are some places where water is so plenti-

ful that even such a rudimentary division as this is not necessary, but every man takes as much water as he wants, by agreement with his neighbour. Such is the case of villages along the Zaindarud when the river is full, and of the villages of Shirkuh after a winter of heavy snow, and many of the villages of Chahar Mahal are in the same happy circumstances in normal years. But the general rule is that the water must be carefully divided, and the commonest way of doing this is by the *tâq* and the *tasht*. The water of a village has so many taqs, each taq being twelve hours, measured approximately from sunrise to sunset, and again from sunset to sunrise. If there are eighteen taqs, the meaning is that the water-supply is sufficient to water the whole village in nine days. Each taq contains a certain number of tashts—suppose a hundred and thirty, which is a favourite number in the Yazd plain—sixty-five by day and sixty-five by night—sixty-five tashts in twelve hours; each tasht is therefore equivalent to the use of the water-supply for a little more than eleven minutes, and this space of time is measured by floating a copper bowl with a needle-hole in its bottom in a large vessel of water; the duration of the

tasht comes to an end as the bowl sinks. The word tasht, in fact, means bowl, but different words are used in different places—in Fahraj the word is *sabu* or bucket, in Ardakan *juraa* or mouthful, in Nain *siraja* or lampful, in Mu-hallat *sua* a corrupted form of *sabu*, and in Qaidu they use a queer word, *ping*. The bowl, like everything else, is divided into six dungas by marks inside, so that, in the case supposed above, a man's right to the use of the water could be measured to within less than two minutes. Given then a village of resident arababs, each one of whom holds his own separately demarcated lands, the distribution of the water is regulated by each man's right to so many tashts. If he has a right to twenty tashts, then (to continue our previous illustration) he will receive water for  $3\frac{3}{4}$  hours of the day, or the night, as the case may be, every tenth day, or three times a month. If there be 24 taqs—or, as it is otherwise expressed, if the *daur i âb*, or cycle of watering, be twelve days, he will get his  $3\frac{3}{4}$  hours of water every thirteenth day only. If he has a right to half a taq, he will get six hours of water; if to a whole taq, twelve hours; and if he owns a whole *shabanruz* or day and night, he is entitled to twenty-four hours'

use of the water every ninth day, or thirteenth day, or whatever the interval may be that is determined by the *daur i ab*. And this again depends upon the copiousness of the water-supply.

It is not necessary, of course, that a village should derive the whole of its water-supply from one source. Every little brook or spring is turned to account with jealous care, and has to support its own few *qurts* or separately-demarcated patches of cultivation. There seem to be two ways of bringing the measurement of such scanty supplies into accord with the general calculation for the village; either the *daur i ab* may be greater or the number of *tashts* in a *taq* may be smaller. Thus the river of Dehbala, on which irrigation mainly depends, has 64 *tashts* in a *taq*; but there are seventy-two water-sources altogether, and some of these have so few as three *tashts* in a *taq*. That which watered the lands of my host in Dehbala was rated at 54 *tashts*, i. e. 27 in a *taq*, and his right extended over six *shabanruz*, the *daur i ab* being twelve days, so that he enjoyed the use of the water for six days, and then it went to others for six days, and returned to him for six days again, and so on; but unfortunately three of his *shabanruz* were *waqf*, or



dedicated to the service of a mosque (he was an old Sayyid), so that what he got was really  $3 \times 54$ , or 162 tashts every thirteenth day. Three shabanruz of the river, on the other hand, would have been equivalent to 384 tashts every thirteenth day. The alternative method of calculation is to give the weaker spring a longer daur i ab, keeping the number of tashts the same. Thus, in Nid some sources have a daur i ab of fourteen days, some of eighteen days, but the number of tashts is 120 in the twenty-four hours for all of them. The tasht, of course, varies in size. The smaller springs often have to be dammed (*istakh bastan* or *salkh bastan*) until the water gathers sufficient head to be let loose on the fields. A single owner may possess the whole of a spring. One *mazra* or hamlet of Sakhvid, for instance, is watered by a spring of 18 taqs, or 9 days daur i ab; and the whole eighteen belong to one man, who might sell a taq or taqs or the fraction of a taq, with or without the land attached. In the latter case, the purchaser must break up land for himself out of the wide foot-slope of Shirkuh. And the great non-resident arbabs, of course, who own whole villages, are lords of land and water together; the water is distributed by the tenants among themselves, and

they pay the arbab in kind, one share for the water and one for the land, or 70 per cent., or three parts out of four, as the case may be. In Kuhpa, a village of this kind, owned by an arbab living in Isfahan, I saw the ryots dividing the water. As I came up, one of them was receiving his three tashts and three dungas. Two men selected to manage the division were sitting over the earthen vessel in which the tasht floated; others were standing or sitting beside the watercourse, flowing with a full stream at their feet. I sat down too, and watched the tasht slowly filling till the water reached the brim, when it was quickly emptied and replaced. This was done thrice, then the water was watched as it rose inside the bowl, till it reached the mark denoting the third dunga, whereupon command was given, and a couple of strokes of a spade shut the water off and sent it into another channel.

In some villages of Faraidan I found the water - distribution by day regulated by the length of a man's shadow, measured in feet; and at night by the stars. Elsewhere I believe a dial is used by day. In other villages of Faraidan and Chahar Mahal, where water is abundant, the lands of the village are marked out into as many sahras as there are days in the

daur i ab, and each sahra gets one whole day watering. In Kharâzi, for instance, and Jungan of Chahar Mahal, and in Sulaijan of Faradan, the daur i ab is seven days, and there are seven sahras, so that the whole village is watered all round in a week. In such a case the share of each cultivator in the water (whether he be arbab or ryot) is not expressed by the habba or other fraction, but each man sees that he gets enough water for the lands he holds in one or more of the sahras. In Kâvarukh, again, the division of the water is carried down no farther than the taq, here called *nimjub* or half a watercourse, meaning, of course, the use of the water-supply for half of twenty-four hours; there is indeed a subdivision of the *nimjub* into four units or *fards*, but the sharers in a *nimjub* divide the produce of the land by *fards* and fractions of a *fard*, instead of dividing the water. The number of *nimjubs* is twenty-eight. Harun al Rashid's watercourse in Gulpaigan is divided into eight branches, and each branch into eight minor channels, thus making sixty-four channels, and the sharers in a channel divide the water by mutual agreement. Qaidu is watered by a brackish river, flowing in summer with a stream slender enough; the

daur i ab is six days, and there are six dungas of water, each reckoned at four *ju* by day and four by night; this makes 48 divisions, or considerably more than the number of ploughs; a man may be entitled to several *ju*, or to fractions of a *ju*. Dâghânak, on the same river, has a similar division, but here there are 96 *ju*, and 19 *ju* are the daily measure of water for five days (20 *ju* on the fifth day), after which the water goes to other villages, returning to Daghânak twelve days later.

The connexion between the division of water and the assessment of the land-revenue would be a plain enough matter if Persian assessments were made on any fixed principle. The method of assessing by the *bunicha* does not extend beyond Kuhbanan. In the Yazd plain, and in Shirkuh, the assessment of a village is based upon a calculation of its water-supply. The simplest case is where a certain rate is imposed per *tasht*; thus, in Fahraj there are 130 *tashts* in the twenty-four hours, and each *tasht* is rated at 18 *qirans* in the *diwani* part of the village (where the land is yearly distributed among the *ryots*), so that the total assessment of this part is 234 *tomans*. The 18 *qirans* represent the value of one *tasht* of water daily all the year

round, but in fact, each individual's turn for water comes only five times in two months, the daur i ab being twelve days. In the arbabi part of the village, the rate per tasht is seven qirans only, and I was assured that the diwani rate was no higher than  $7\frac{1}{2}$  qirans fifteen years ago. The two qanats of Nain are reckoned at 2048 siraja each, that is, each half of the village needs 2048 siraja to water it, but the daur i ab is 16 days, so that the number of siraja per day from each qanat is really 128 only. The assessment is founded on this assumed number of 2048 siraja, each siraja being rated at two qirans; thus the total assessment is 409 tomans 6 qirans for each qanat, or 819 tomans and 2 qirans for the whole village. There are, however, other water-sources which contribute to the assessment of the village. In Ardakan there is a spring of 2304 juraa assessed at one qiran the juraa, the daur i ab being 18 days (at 128 juraa a day); this water-supply is therefore a comparatively slender one, and is assessed at a low rate accordingly. Another way of assessing is by the taq. There are 24 taqs in Sagzi, assessed at 15 tomans the taq; the adjacent hamlet has 18 taqs, at 12 to 14 tomans the taq, but  $7\frac{1}{2}$  of them pay nothing, as belonging to the

mujtahid of Isfahan. The *daur i ab* being always half the number of *taqs*, the meaning of 15 tomans for a *taq* in *Sagzi* is that the right to have twelve hours' water every thirteenth day is valued at 15 tomans a year. The value of a *taq* varies according to the copiousness of the source. There are sources in *Taft* which are assessed so high as 65 tomans per *taq*, and others (there are 17 sources altogether) which are assessed so low as 5 tomans per *taq*.

In *Shirkuh* I had the satisfaction of coming upon the recent work of a Persian settlement officer, who had been revising the old assessments made by one *Mirza Baba* forty years before. *Mirza Baba* seems to have had some notion of settlement work; he measured the capacity of every water-source—drew off and weighed the water, as the Persians say (*âbrâ kashîd wa sanjîd*)—and imposed a corresponding assessment. He does not seem to have adopted any uniform rate per *tasht*, though in *Dehbala* a rate of four *qirans* was spoken of, but the uniform application of this rate would produce a much greater revenue than the actual assessment of the village. *Dehbala* paid 1138 tomans a year under *Mirza Baba's* assessment; it has seventy-two water-sources, of capacity

varying from 128 to six tashts per day, the daur i ab being eighteen days. Assuming an average of even 20 tashts per day, or 360 in the eighteen days, the average assessment of a water-source would be  $350 \times 4$  qirans, or 144 tomans a year, and this multiplied by 72 would give an inordinate figure. The plan seems rather to have been the assessment of each water-source at a lump sum corresponding to its capacity (*farakhur i hálash*). Some of the smaller springs of Sakhvid, for example, are assessed so low as five tomans a year. It would be very difficult, in fact, to fix any rate per tasht for springs which in summer-time need to be dammed in order to hoard the water, while their supply sinks from forty tashts a day to ten. Mirza Baba's successor appears to have maintained his assessments unchanged for the most part; he raised the revenue demand of Dehbala to 1214 tomans, after having received 100 tomans from the arbabs to keep it unaltered; but they made him refund his 100 tomans when they found out how they had been cheated; and he raised the revenue demand of Manshar from 480 to 1000 tomans, probably by resuming religious grants. One way of enhancing revenue is that which has been practised in

Agda, where a water-source assessed at 100 tomans really pays 250, the State taking "a bucket and a half extra," as they phrase it (*dalû o nîm ziyada*). This looks like the bunicha system, but with this difference, that the 100 tomans here represent the full assessment of the water-source so many years ago, whereas the bunicha is merely a basis of calculation. In Tuhdashk I found what looked more like a bunicha. The village had been given to a Sayyid by Fath Ali Shah, and the present seventeen arbabs pay 200 shahi per shahi of the original assessment; this was 22 shahi, so the actual revenue-demand is 22 tomans. But here again the 22 shahi seem to have been a real assessment at first, though converted into a bunicha subsequently, on the death of the original donee.

It will perhaps be noted as an extraordinary thing that the quality of land seems to be left out of account in Persian assessments; nevertheless, so far as I could ascertain, the case is so. An assessment founded on the water-supply excludes considerations of the relative fertility of land. The case of Taft will serve as an illustration. Here we have a plain of perhaps two square miles in extent, with a fertile soil



composed of detritus from the hills which it is embosomed, and with a water-supply sufficient in all but exceptional years. The relative fertility of land, as gauged by its price in private sales, varies from five to 100 tomans per *jarib*; yet the assessment has been fixed without any reference to these variations, and depends simply on the taq of water. An easy explanation is that the land belongs to the arbabs and the water to the State; but even where both land and water belong to the arbab (as in a village which a man has bought with its qanat, or where he has made a qanat), the State exercises its right of taxation; and the omission to tax the land in Taft and elsewhere is really to be explained by the paramount necessity of water, if any land, whether good or bad, is to yield a crop at all. I have been told that where water is very plentiful, regard is had to the quality of land in imposing the assessment; but I never met with a case of this kind. In Qaidu only did I find an assessment which professed to be based on the land, and this was of the rudest kind, half a qiran per *jarib*; and it was only a kind of bunicha after all, the real assessment being "twelve rates per rate (*jam' i duazda jam'*)," or six qirans the *jarib*. The Chahar Mahal villages, with their abundant

water-supply (and the same is true of Lahinjan and part of Faraidan), are assessed each at a lump sum, which may originally have been computed with regard to the fertility of their lands, but subsequent arbitrary enhancements have obliterated the old basis of calculation ; and, in fact, so far as I could see, regard is had much more to the extent than to the quality of the land.

Passing into Lahinjan and Chahar Mahal, one enters a country of great non-resident arbabs. It is noteworthy that the large plains of Persia, with their extensive and regular systems of irrigation, whether from qanats or from a river, always contain a large proportion of villages owned by some one or two wealthy landlords who live in the large town or city which stands in the best-watered part of the plain. The first village we entered in Lahinjan was one which the Prince bought from the Imam Juma of Isfahan five years ago for 4750 tomans, and he is said to have spent 14,000 tomans since then on qanats ; the revenue is 1400 tomans, and goes into the Prince's pocket. The greater part of Lahinjan, however, is watered from the Zaindarud. The plan for the distribution of the water is the same as that on the Qum river. It is only in the summer months that a careful

apportionment is necessary; then a mirab is appointed, who allows each set of villages to have the water so many days in turn; or the villagers manage the matter themselves without the intervention of any mirab. The course of the Zaindarud is thus divided into four sections; there are the upper villages, then Lahinjan plain, Isfahan plain, and finally Rudashk; and each of these sections has a right to the water of the river for five days, the upper sections taking no water during the five days due to a section below them. The Qum river has three sections, Dâghânak being in the middle; the water is enjoyed by the upper villages five days, then five days by Daghanak, and then it goes to Qum for six days. I was at Daghanak and Qum during the term of the upper villages, consequently the river was nearly dry at Daghanak, and quite dry at Qum. By bribing the mirab, a village can get water out of its turn. Official perquisites of a similar kind are not altogether unknown upon Indian canals.

The portion of my travels which lay between Isfahan and Qum was the most fruitful of information regarding the relation of the under-tenant to his landlord, whether the landlord were the State or a resident arbab, or a great non-resident arbab. The last trace I found of

diwani lands yearly distributed among the ryots was in Fahraj. Such a plan is evidently incompatible with any claim of the ryot to his holding, though it may happen that he obtains the same piece of land to cultivate several years in succession. The diwani villages of Faraidan appear to be managed differently. In Sulaijan, for example, each ryot has his own strip or strips of land in each of the seven sahras. So again in Chirmil above Lahinjan, though there are two resident arbabs, the cultivation is done by ryots, each holding his own demarcated lands. In the Chahar Mahal villages of the Ilkhani, the same rule prevails. Hasanabad of Lahinjan (the Prince's village), is actually farmed by the ryots, who divide the revenue demand among themselves according to their shares or habbas, 15 qirans 3 shahi per habba; this makes 92 habbas, the revenue being 1400 tomans. Similarly there are 80 habbas of ryots in the neighbouring village of Naugarân, owned by an arbab resident in Isfahan; and in Chirmil also the ryots' holdings are supposed to correspond to their habbas. Dast-i-Na of Chahar Mahal belongs to the Ilkhani, and pays a revenue of 500 tomans and 200 kharwars of grain, which the ryots apportion among themselves in the ratio of their means, as measured by the lands

held by each. All this seemed to point to subproprietary rights on the ryots' part, and to mark out the great arbab as what we should call a taluqdar in certain parts of India, having proprietary rights below him which he cannot arbitrarily alter or abolish. But on inquiring I found no recognition, or even tradition, of such a relationship between ryot and arbab. The ryots disclaimed the possession of proprietary rights at any time; and though they expected to retain possession of their strips of land during their lifetime, and to hand them down to their heirs, yet they had no idea of any positive right, and regarded the arbab's power as limited only by custom, and by the expediency of maintaining a good understanding with his tenants. On the whole it seems that the Persian tenant enjoys security of tenure so long as he pays his rent. The common rate for rents in kind in Lahinjan is two-thirds of the produce, i. e. the same as in southern Persia for wet lands. I believe there is no dry cultivation in Lahinjan. In Chahar Mahal and Faraidan the dry cultivation is called *bakhsh* or *dem*, and the rate for wet lands is one-third only of the produce, for these mountainlands are deep in snow during great part of the year.

These remarks on the land-revenue system of

Persia would perhaps be incomplete without some attempt to illustrate the incidence of the land revenue per stated area of land, as is the fashion in India; yet I am bound to confess that I can offer no calculation which I would recommend anybody to accept with confidence. The nominal assessment differs so often from the sum really exacted, and the land-measures are so various and so vague, that anything like exactitude in calculation is impossible. The very demarcation of fields or longitudinal strips in a Persian village is of a nature visible only to the experienced eye of the villager himself. One grows accustomed to the absence of hedges in India, but when you take away also the little dividing ridges of earth, and the little round heaps of clay at their extremities, you find field run into field in a surprising manner. Here follow what calculations I have been able to make. My host in Askizar paid two tomans a year for water sufficient to irrigate 75 jarib, and this was the full jarib, as he declared, that is, 1440 square *gaz*, the *gaz* being 33 inches; thus the jarib is 1320 square yards, and 75 jarib are 99,000 square yards, or 32·7 Indian Government bighas (the bigha being 3025 square yards), and two tomans are equivalent to 8·501 rupees; hence the rate per Government

bigha would be 4 anas 2 pie only, or less than one-fourth of a fair average rate in India. In Nain, three siraja water a jarib, and the rate is 2 qirans per siraja, or 6 qirans per jarib, instead of four-fifteenths of a qiran as in Askizar; the rate is therefore  $22\frac{1}{3}$  times the Askizar rate, i.e. Rs. 5 : 13 : 9 per Indian bigha—a fabulous rate. The assessment of Tuhdashk is the merely nominal one of 22 tomans, yet if the rate per bigha be calculated, it will be found to be very heavy thus:—The daur i ab being 8 days, one shab anruz is rated at  $\frac{2}{3}$  tomans, and it contains 180 siraja, and waters 30 jarib (six siraja to a jarib being the measure of the Tuhdashk qanat) this would give Rs. 0 : 12 : 11 per Indian bigha, if the jarib were the standard one; but it is not being only 24 *zar'*  $\times 12$ , or 264 square yards wherefore the rate is  $11\frac{1}{3}$  times as great, or Rs. 9 : 4 : 7 per Indian bigha,—which again is incredible. In Kuhpa the standard jarib takes 16 siraja of water, rated at 14 qirans a year; this is equivalent to Rs. 13 : 4 : 9 per Indian bigha. Finally, in Qaidu the rate is 6 qirans per jarib, the jarib being ten *kila*, and each *kila* being a square with a side of 20 paces; thus the jarib is 3340 square yards, and the rate per Indian bigha would be about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  rupees.

## CHAPTER XII.

REMARKS ON THE PRESENT CONDITION  
OF PERSIA.

It is the fashion to talk of the Persian Government, and indeed of the Persian country, as something exhausted and decaying. There is much in the external aspect of both country and Government to bear out this opinion. Geologists say that Persia must have had a much larger rainfall in the past. The long foot-slopes which form so characteristic a feature of Persian mountain ranges show that the decreasing rainfall has not had power to wash the detritus down into the plains. It is not easy to imagine anything better calculated to convey the idea of effete sterility than one of these long slopes of brown rock-chips, between the black scarred mountain-wall above, and the white clay and gleaming kavir below. It seems wonderful that the mountains should be so high and so extensive, and yet send down so few perennial streams. Zarda Kuh indeed gives birth to the Zaindarud and the Kuran, and



Elburz to the Haraz and the river of Rasht ; but these are useless for irrigation throughout a large part of their course ; and on the whole Persian mountains are singularly deficient even in springs and brooks. The stony plain again, and the salt deserts ; the dreary tracts of salt hills, where all the water is either brackish or too salt and bitter to drink—such regions as the country between Zarand and Yazd, or between Mahallat and Teheran, or the district of Lar in the south—suggest a feeling of hopelessness for a kingdom more than half of whose lands are in this desperate condition. Add to this the traces of decay and ruin which one meets with in so many villages, the empty bazaars falling to pieces in Isfahan, the neglected garden-palaces of Shiraz, the crumbling walls of even commercial Yazd and Karmān, the long lines of choked qanats on the great plains, the old bridges left unrepaired, and the total absence of public works of any kind—and the whole forms a picture sufficiently discouraging. After all, however, the future of the country depends upon its people, and the Persian cultivator makes a fairly good use of the opportunities he has. Without the indefatigable industry of the Hindoo, he still contrives to do

a good deal of work after his own fashion, and nothing can exceed the pluck and perseverance with which he will turn to account any store of water, however slender, and however remote in inhospitable mountains or deserts. A sufficiency of water seems to be all that is wanted; the stony-looking ground is fertile enough, and will produce wheat that can compare favourably with that of the best parts of India. The qanats, again, testify to an amount of labour and ingenuity that speaks volumes for the agricultural capabilities of the people.

The one physical peculiarity which tells against Persia, and seems to preclude its prosperity, is the scanty rainfall. But even this has its advantageous side, for the dryness of the air prevents endemic disease; the Persian climate is conspicuously healthy. In this respect Persia vastly excels India; and indeed it is impossible for the Anglo-Indian to travel in Persia without feeling a casual touch of regret that our rule is not there. Such pleasant stations could be formed in Persia for the Anglo-Indian official; there is so much to be done in the way of governing, of reducing things to order; there are all the dormant capabilities of the country to be awakened. We should soon have a

carriage-road from Bushire to Shiraz, a railway from Karman to Yazd; we should work out the treasures of lead, and iron, and copper, which lie hid in the mountains of Rafsinjan; we should make famous manufacture of the wool yielded by the great nomad flocks, improve Persian vineyards and export their wine, bring the silk industry to perfection, extract a return even from salt-strewn ravine and kavir; we should equalize the land assessment, and prevent famine by the storage of water. To take this last point first:—While we were marching through the Lar region in the south, where the mountains are not high enough to hold stores of snow, I could not but remark how the mountain-sides and their foot-slopes were scored with dry torrent-beds, showing by their width and the magnitude of their boulders what a powerful volume of water must have rushed down in winter—and it was all lost on the unfruitful stony slopes. The collective quantity of water thus wasted must be very considerable, for the mountains, being perfectly bare and rocky, render up every drop of water that falls on them. There is a small hill of limestone overlooking Lar, with a shrine high up under its brow, and a good-sized abambar attached to the

same, which is yearly filled by the scour of rainfall from a very small area of the steep hillside above. The scour from the hills on either side of the Lar valley would fill a series of large reservoirs, invaluable for irrigation. This is the way in which water used to be stored in Bundelkhand, where we are now at length thinking of repairing the ruins of the tanks that existed under native rule. The outlay per given area would be considerably less in Persia, where villages are so sparse. Again, there is much to be done with qanats. Though private enterprise repairs old qanats or opens new ones every year, still the impression one receives from travelling through the country is that the number of qanats used to be far greater in times past. And tradition corroborates this impression—as in the Harm plain, which is believed to have had sixty qanats at one period, and now has hardly more than six. In short, if the essential question of water supply were taken in hand and vigorously dealt with, there would soon be an end to all talk about the decaying condition of Persia. The land is not exhausted, but full of life and energy. Water is all that it wants; and small as the rainfall is, the water scattered yearly over the mountains

is sufficient to irrigate an area very much greater than the present area of cultivation.

Next, as to the land-revenue assessment: the foregoing chapter will have shown how unequal is its incidence at present, and how haphazard the method of valuation in most cases. No one system of assessment could be applied to tracts differing so widely in natural advantages as do the provinces of Persia; but each district has its traditional method, which would be a perfectly safe and accurate guide if it were fairly followed. The agriculturist would benefit immensely, of course, by a reasonable demand fixed for a term of twenty or thirty years. He is quite as much of a revenue-paying creature as the Indian ryot; to resist the demands of the Government hardly ever enters his head, while he seems incapable of conceiving an objection to them in principle. Then, besides its agricultural wealth, the country undoubtedly has mineral and metallic treasures. See how much could be made out of the single article of salt. The Sambhar lake in India is a property of enormous value, while the salt lakes of Persia are practically worthless. Not one hundred-weight of salt is taken in a year from the Shahghaib valley, incrustated all over as it is with

salt crystals. Qum, again, possesses a mountain—the Kuh-i-Namak—whence any amount of white salt slabs might be carted away; but all that one sees is a casual mule-load, to satisfy the requirements of the bazaar. Of the metallic wealth of the Sirjan and Karman mountains, I have spoken in their place; and the Bakhtiari mountains are said to be rich too. I saw many specimens of their ores in Isfahan. A railway from Karman to Yazd would run through the middle of the mining districts, and connect the two great trading cities of central Persia. Its construction would be comparatively simple; the whole way is a plain, with long gentle gradients. All the main routes of Persia, in fact, are level enough, and might be converted into very good roads with a little time and trouble. In short, we could give public works to the country, and greatly increase its productiveness.

There can be no question that the Persians are much pleasanter to deal with than the people of India. Heaven forbid that I should speak unjustly or slightly of the Indian ryot, who pays me my wages. No one who has witnessed his laboriousness, his thrift, his self-denial, his faithfulness to his obligations, his respect for family ties, his acquiescence and

obedience, can help feeling some degree of kindness towards the most governable people on the face of the earth. In these qualities the Indian ryot doubtless excels the Persian; and one important particular the difference is great that it furnishes the Anglo-Indian with a perpetual matter of unfavourable comment upon one side of the Persian character. The Indian makes a good servant; the Persian servant almost the worst conceivable. Nor is it to be supposed that the average Persian is one who is more truthful, more straightforward, or more honourable than the average Indian. So the Englishmen consider the Persian to be rather the worst of the two in these respects. For my part, I fancy all Orientals are much alike; and in writing of an Oriental people, one is understood, of course, to imply that they share the common defects of the Oriental nature. But the great charm of the Persians is their malignity and heartiness. These qualities in the Afghans are linked with bloodthirsty treachery and greed; but the Persians are not bloodthirsty or cruel by nature, and one need fear no violation of the laws of hospitality under a Persian roof. Again, whatever may be the rule in Azarbaijan and Khurasan, a Persian is

the parts where I travelled has no objection to eat with a European, or to smoke from the same qalyan, unless he believes that some one of the stricter school among his countrymen is present. I need hardly say what an element of attractiveness lies in this one fact, as a contrast to the caste exclusiveness of India. In other respects also the Persians have an admirable freedom from prejudices; they are a quick-witted and ingenious people, highly imitative, and ready to adopt the manners of Western nations. "You English have been a hundred years in India," said a Persian to me, "and you have not yet taught the people to drink out of glass. If you were governing Persia, in twenty years the whole population would be wearing European clothes, and eating with knife and fork." This was perhaps an exaggerated way of putting the truth. Certainly Persia presents no deep-rooted obstacles to the influx of European thought and manners—even of European fashions, if they could but reach the women. A nation which has produced so many free-thinking poets can never relapse into bigotry; the influence of Hafiz is greater in the long run than that of all the mullas; and one sees at once that the



Mohammedanism of Persia is very different from that of India. Another instance of that freedom from prejudice which distinguishes Persians is their love of travel. The one redeeming point in a Persian servant is his uncomplaining endurance of long marches, and the cheerful curiosity with which he confronts the prospect of an excursion into some half-starved region among the savage hills.

Much might be made of such a people in such a country; but on the whole we may be glad that the task has not been set us. A re-assessment of Persia, for example, would be a great work, no doubt, and might be followed by a term of prosperity; but our Indian assessments show too plainly that the demand of the State—or, rather, of the foreign rulers of the country—tends to increase no less surely and severely when systematized than when left to chance; and that in changing the indefiniteness of old custom for the rigid law of rent, the last state of the cultivator may easily become a good deal worse than the first. It is not possible to make even a guess at the average incidence of the land-revenue in any province of Persia, but if general impressions are worth anything, I think that an Anglo-Indian officer who travels through

Persia while the crops are on the ground, and notes the small area of cultivation round the villages, and the amount of their assessments as compared with the assessments of Indian villages he knows, will probably carry away the idea that the cultivated area of Persia is more heavily taxed than that of India. And it is to be remembered that besides the land-revenue proper, and the reliefs levied in the shape of a poll-tax according to circumstances, the Persian cultivator has usually (for the rule is not the same in all districts) to pay a sheep and cattle tax, varying from one-third of a qiran to one qiran per sheep or goat, from  $2\frac{1}{2}$  qirans to one toman per cow, one toman for an ass, and so on. Yet with all this, it certainly seemed to me that the condition of the Persian peasant was better than that of the Indian. So far as regards the outward evidences of comfort, there is not much to choose between a Persian and an Indian village. The Persian village is the more solidly built, and its houses are better adapted for European habitation; on the other hand, Persian children and women wear no ornaments, and the absence of silver bangles strikes one at first as a sign of poverty. But after all, the principal tests are

the clothing and the physical condition of the people. The Persian peasant is much better dressed than the Indian. So is the inhabitant of the towns also. A Persian bazaar is filled with men in clothes which for completeness and decency might not fear comparison with the dress of an Indian gentleman. But indeed the difference is hardly less noticeable in poor and remote villages. I can scarcely remember having seen a Persian ryot imperfectly clad, and the state of the women seems to be somewhat better than that of the men. As to feeding, the condition of Fars, after two years of severe scarcity, was not quite a fair criterion; yet even here I saw neither man, woman, nor child in a state of weakness from insufficient food; while farther north, throughout the provinces of Karman, Yazd, and Isfahan, and from Faraida to the Caspian, the physical condition of the peasantry seemed to leave nothing to desire. One saw only large men, heavily built, well nourished, often surprisingly fair. Nowhere, not even in such desolate and unprosperous villages as Harm, Kâryân, or Kaha, did I meet with any thing like those gaunt and miserable outcasts who make hideous the skirts of an Indian village. If the over-fed banya, swollen

with ghee and usury, was wanting, the spectre of chronic starvation was wanting too. The average level of the Persian peasant is higher than that of the Indian ryot. The reason may not lie in causes connected with the revenue administration—it would be absurd to institute a comparison between our orderly administration and Persian misgovernment—but the fact at least seemed unmistakable enough to my eyes.

I need not say that no care was taken of the ryots during the famine in the south of Persia. They were left to die, after paying up as much revenue as could be extracted from them. It cannot be said that a government of this kind evoked much loyalty among the people of Fars. I have recorded some of their complaints, and the expression of their desire that the English, or some European Power, would take the country and rule it righteously. But without wishing to palliate misgovernment, of which there is undoubtedly plenty in Persia, one is bound to remember that the agricultural class all over the world possesses a great faculty of grumbling, whether at the harvest or at the landlord, and here the landlord was the State. What sort of answers would a Turkish gentleman get, for instance, who should travel in India

and ask the village folk questions about their rents and assessments? I imagine that he would speedily collect a body of grievances calculated to show up our government as the most tyrannical in the world. And it is a nice question, what degree of misgovernment by one's own countrymen is worse than government by foreigners. Some kind of national life at least is possible in the former case; it is difficult to find any in the latter. The Anglo-Indian is struck by the independent bearing and address of the Persian as compared with the Indian, by his sociableness, his sense of humour and fun, by the air of freedom and enjoyment which pervades a Persian bazaar, by the unrestricted movement of the people along lines of their own choosing. This may be due in part to a difference of temperament, but one cannot help ascribing it mainly to a homogeneous nationality—to the fact that governors and governed are of the same language and religion, and thoroughly understand each other, whatever causes they may have for mutual complaint. Of course it is true that Persia comprises several nationalities; but the difference between a Turk of Tabriz and a Biluch of Bampur is as nothing in com-

parison with the vast gulf that separates both of them from an Englishman.

What, then, is the probable future of Persia? If the soil is not exhausted, nor the people show any signs of a decaying race, is Persia likely to develop any steady improvement by herself, or must she seek help from Europe? Perhaps it was not a bad thing that the concessions to Baron Reuter fell through. One example such as Egypt is sufficient of the exploitation of an Oriental country by European speculators. Persia is fortunate in her remoteness from Europe. Her neighbour Turkey may serve her as a warning of the consequences which attend the borrowing of European money. As a military power, Persia is much weaker than Turkey, but financially and politically she is in a position incomparably better. Persia has no public debt, and she is not engaged in a perpetual struggle with the Western Powers, nor exposed to remonstrance or rebuke or dictation in respect of matters of domestic administration. There is indeed no room for interference; there are no Greek Christians in unwilling subjection, and the Armenian community are contented with security of life

and property. Moreover, the country is at one with itself, free from internal intrigue and disquieting rumours, no less than from actual revolt. The one thing wanted is a better system of government. It seems to be admitted that the Shah himself is the ablest man in the country, and that his intentions are good ; but he can only see with the eyes and hear with the ears of his officials, and the less said about their earnestness and integrity, the better. So long as governorships are obtained by bribery (taâruf), and regarded as opportunities of making perquisites (mudâkhil), there can be no hope of effectual improvement from within. No Persian placeman, whether governor of a province or naib of some petty district, has any assurance that bribery or intrigue at head-quarters will not oust him to-morrow ; so he makes what he can while he has time, on the familiar Eastern principle of converting power into money. The men who have done most for Persia, whose names are held in grateful remembrance to this day, and whose works stand as memorials of them and earn them the blessings of hundreds of travellers (including here and there a stray European), have been men of local estate and influence, such as the

Mushir of Shiraz, or the Vakil-ud-Daulat of Karman, the hereditary grandees of a province, whom the central authority was fain to leave undisturbed till their death gave an opportunity of breaking the family influence. The spirit which prompted these men exists still in the country, if it were encouraged by permanence of office. One meets with Persian officials who are able to govern. Fath Ali Khan of Lar is one example; the Zill-us-Sultan is another. Isfahan and Yazd are well administered, yet it is quite uncertain how long the Prince will retain these provinces, let alone the rest of his wide dominions. Even now, perhaps, the signs of disfavour have begun to appear. The evil effects upon the country of this uncertain tenure of office are much intensified, of course, in a famine. No governor who holds his place merely by favour dare grant any remission on account of perished crops. It will be a long time before Fars recovers from the late famine. The province wants careful nursing, and is not in the least likely to get any. For the rest, as to isolated acts of misgovernment, such as taking away the subject's wife, or appropriating the produce of his orchard or date grove, I doubt if they are so numerous as to constitute



in themselves a grievous check upon the happiness of the people in general. In fact, the state of Persia might be sensibly improved, the one fault of niggardliness at head-quarters could be overcome. The Shah has good intentions, but he grudges to spend his savings. Hence the neglect to pay the levies sent against the Kurds in Azarbaijan, and the consequent sacking of Persian villages by the hungry troops. But even as it is, in spite of niggardliness, misgovernment, and famine, the progress made in Persia within the last ten years is unmistakable. The roads are safer than they have ever been; a postal route has been established from Karman to Bandar Abbas; telegraph lines have been laid from Karman to Isfahan, from Teheran to Mashhad eastward and to the Caspian northward, and in Arabistan; the cultivation of the poppy has greatly increased the trade of Karman, Yazd, and Isfahan has gone on growing; Seistan and Western Baluchistan have been reduced to order; the capital has been greatly improved, and new roads have been made connecting it with the Caspian. Possibly a railway will be made some day, from Teheran to Qazvin, though it is said that one of the princes has been cutting into the young

embankment for clay wherewith to bake bricks for his country house. If peaceable government continues as at present, the natural tendency to the accumulation of wealth, with its concomitant advantages, may be trusted to overcome all drawbacks and defects, in Persia as in most countries of the world.

It is not certain, however, that Persia will always be left free to develop herself after her own fashion. The shadow of Russia hangs over her northern provinces, while in central and even in southern Persia the name of Russia commands general respect and awe. The Russian Emperor is *the* great Emperor; the traveller is asked, "Are you a European or a Russian?" The name of Russia outweighs that of all the rest of Europe. The preponderance of Russian influence becomes more and more marked as one draws nearer to its centre, the capital. The Russian minister is not more respected in Teheran than the English, but he has much more work to do. His official duties bring him more frequently into contact with officers of the Persian government, and it is only in the nature of things that his influence should be felt more. And whatever his influence has been in the past, we may be sure that it

must greatly increase now that the Akhal Teke country has been annexed, and that the whole northern frontier of Persia, from the Caucasus to Sarakhs, is overlapped by Russian territory. Nobody who has seen the Persian army can entertain the thought of effectual resistance,—indeed, of even a material check—offered to a Russian force which should invade the country at any point along a frontier-line of a thousand miles. Granted a cause of war, it would simply rest with Russia whether she should annex Azarbaijan, or choose rather some strip of territory on the other side of the Caspian, which should give her a more fertile country to support her progress eastwards. The Persians know this, and fear the Russians accordingly. One cannot pretend to guess how far the men in highest station may have been gained over to Russian interests, but the ordinary Persian regards Russia with fear and dislike. At the same time, one sees very little indication of a desire to enlist the friendship of England as a safeguard. English influence throughout Persia is as nearly as possible nothing. The Indo-Persian telegraph was trusted to extend our political influence, and it has unquestionably been useful in familiarizing Persians with Englishmen, and

in clearing away old prejudices against Europeans generally ; but foreigners benefit by this almost as much as ourselves, and it would be absurd to suppose that the residence of a few telegraph officers in Shiraz and Isfahan can be of any political advantage.

It will hardly be denied that the influence of England ought to have some weight in Persian councils. It cannot be a matter of indifference to us whether the country does or does not fall under the supremacy of Russia. We too have interests in Persia ; we have a legitimate right to make our voice heard, and to command respect for our opinion in matters touching our interests. If the extension of Russian influence over Central Asian khanates and Turkoman steppes is confessedly a fact of import more or less serious for us, the growth of Russian influence in Persia surely deserves some attention. For India will never be invaded from Bokhara, nor even from Merv ; the approaches to India do not lie in these directions ; but the route through Khurasan has been trodden by more than one conqueror. Again, the subjugation of Turkoman or Khivan is pure gain to humanity ; Russia has a civilizing mission in those regions, with which it would perhaps have been wrong

to interfere, even were they not wholly beyond the sphere of our interference. To think of our taking up the cause of the Teke Turkomans would be absurd. But the Persians are not a community of robbers and man-stealers; they are a peaceable people, living quietly under their own form of government—an imperfect one, no doubt, yet better for them, on the whole, than any European interference. It seems a pity to allow them to grow up in the belief that they must make the best terms they can with Russia, having no friend to stand between them and their over-powerful neighbour. The most likely consequence will be a sudden fit of alarm when we discover, some years hence, that Persia has thrown herself into the arms of Russia; and then we may be hurried into a miserable war to compel Persia to be our friendly ally, like Afghanistan. It would be cheaper and more satisfactory to begin by making a friend of Persia now. It may be objected that we have guaranteed too much already, and that if we take in Persia also, we shall be guaranteeing the whole of southern Asia as far as India eastward. But surely there are intermediate steps between the practical extinction of our influence and the obligations of

a guarantee. One very simple and unobjectionable step would be the encouragement of a more lively interest in Persia and the Persians among the junior officers of our missions in Bushire and Teheran. Perhaps the staff should be strengthened ; at any rate, the opportunity of exploring and surveying the country ought not to be lost, for no one knows how long the chance may last. At present, no objection is made to a European's travelling anywhere, and asking what question he pleases. Every Englishman who travels in Persia does some service to his country by spreading the name and fame of England ; I do not mean by boastfulness, but by truthfully satisfying the curiosity of the people. We pride ourselves on our capacity of dealing with inferior races, yet perhaps the Russians beat us there after all. Last year a Russian officer brought one of the imperial Orders of his country as a gift from the Czar to the Zill-us-Sultan in Isfahan, and stayed there a fortnight, during which time he dined every day with some one of the local grandees. Such association with the people enables one to understand them.

It might be possible to arrive at some more substantial basis of understanding. Russia has the question of the delimitation of the

Turkoman frontier as a ground for debate, for mutual concessions—in short, as a basis of new interests between herself and Persia. We might have a similar ground in the navigation of the river Karun, for instance. There is this objection, that if Persia refused to grant what we wished, we should not be prepared to resort to force. But Russia can gain what she wishes without resorting to force. Diplomatic contests between two Powers of Europe in an Asiatic court are an unedifying and unprofitable business, but English and Russian interests in Persia are separated by the whole breadth of the country, and there is much that we might do at present without acting in any spirit of obtrusive rivalry. The north-eastern corner of Persia is the part haunted by English travellers, and written and talked about, so far as Parliament and the public pay any attention to Persia at all. But our true line of action is along the seaboard and in central Persia. Khurasan is practically out of our reach. We cannot affect so remote a region directly, either for good or evil. If we want to prevent Khurasan and the rest of Persia from falling under the protection of Russia, the most natural and obvious means is to build up a legitimate influence of our own

in those parts of the country with which we have directly to do. Broadly speaking, the commerce of central and southern Persia depends upon England and India. The Russian goods imported in these regions are specialities of little value, such as samovars and candlesticks. Can any one suppose that if Russia had such a trade with Persia as we have, her political influence would not be vastly greater even than it is? The trade between India and Persia is capable of development by means wholly unobjectionable, which would at the same time teach the Persians how much their best interests coincide with ours, and would liberate them from the single dominating dread of Russia. Suppose, for example, that Bushire were made into a port. In the opinion of those who should know best — English merchants resident in Bushire — the thing could be done for quite a moderate expenditure. The Persian Government has profited by the growth of the trade of Bushire in recent years, and would profit still more by an improvement which would give a decided impulse to commerce. By proceeding gradually, we might manage to effect a great improvement in each of the main routes from the Persian Gulf to the interior of



Persia, — the routes from Bandar Abbas to Karman, from Linga to Lar, from Bushire to Shiraz; and a new route might be opened up for western Persia, up the Karun River, and thence by the shortest road to Isfahan. There is no chance that the Persian Government will do any of these things within any predicable time. Private speculation will not risk European money in a country which cannot give satisfactory guarantees. It seems a very bold suggestion that Indian revenues should be expended in furthering public works in Persia. But consider the treaty of Gundamuk, which “being dead yet speaketh” somewhat to the point in this matter. The clauses in that treaty to which nobody ever thought of taking objection were those which provided for the development of commercial routes through Afghanistan, by the help of the Indian Government. Had the treaty stood, the money for these works would never have been found by the Amir of Cabul; the Indian Government must have paid for the roads and lines of telegraph. That policy proved impracticable in Afghanistan, because Afghanistan is not Persia. And are we not trying to cultivate friendly relations with the Afghans even now, after all

the bloodshed and hatred that has raised so vast a barrier between us and them? We would willingly subsidize the Amir by larger and larger grants, in return for concessions on his part in accordance with the universal comity of nations. Well, but while we are doing, or would do, all this in that extremely unprofitable field, Afghanistan, here is Persia which counts as a flourishing and civilized power by comparison, and which we are systematically neglecting. Is the danger less? The danger is far greater; the Afghan frontier is as yet far removed from the farthest Russian outposts in the desert, but a chain of Russian garrisons extends along the northern frontier of Persia, and draws provisions from Persia's best provinces. Are we afraid of the cost? If State loans to Persia never realized a penny to us in return, they would yet be far cheaper in the end than a war costing twenty millions of money, to say nothing of the misery and wickedness. It is easy to say that Persian suspicion could not be overcome. The attempt has never been made. The Shah is fully aware of the value of money; let us try him with a reasonable offer, and see whether he will not consent to some scheme for developing the trade of his country under the direction of

English officers and with the help of English (or Indian) money. We keep on hoping to induce the Amir of Cabul to grant us access to his dominions, though every Afghan has the most fatal reason to distrust and fear our power. The Persians, on the contrary, bear us no grudge for the one brief conflict that we have had with them; they are not afraid of our invading their country. The cloud of danger to them is gathering in the north. Surely it is worth while to do something, to make some sacrifice, for the sake of averting another Oriental war fifteen or twenty years hence, when we awake to the discovery that Persia being in the hands of Russia, it matters very little what we may do or leave undone in Afghanistan.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## ON TRAVELLING IN PERSIA.

No very extensive outfit is needed for a six months' tour in Persia. One is usually inclined to consider a number of things as necessaries which are really quite superfluous; at least, I know that was my own case, and therefore some hints upon this subject may be useful to any reader who should form the design of seeing the country for himself. He ought to take a travelling-suit of stout drill, and another of *pattu* or other coarse warm cloth. The former suit can be worn at low or moderate elevations; the latter on the high table-lands and in the mountain country. A single waistcoat of warm material can be worn under either coat. The coats should button close under the chin, and down to below the waist. Four flannel shirts and a couple of extra warm shirts of flannel (for out-door sleeping on frosty nights) will suffice for one's

every-day linen, and a couple of white shirts and collars had better be kept in reserve for great occasions. A respectable black coat and waistcoat (a frock coat is best for interviewing Persian notables, as it conforms to their ideas of decency), with a pair of light tweed trousers, will do for evening wear in the houses of the few European residents that one meets with. If the traveller intends to visit Teheran, he will do well to carry a dress-suit with him, in case he should be asked to dine at the Residency. Boots ought to be stout and solid, laced up the instep. I found "ammunition" boots admirably adapted for Persian mountains. A couple of pair of these, and a good pair of riding boots, ought to be enough. Add a pair of drill riding-trousers, and the wardrobe is complete.

For provisions, it will suffice to carry three or four largish pots of Liebig's extract of beef, and a couple of dozen packets of Kopf's soups; the latter should be carefully packed. Half a dozen pounds of tea will be very useful, whether for drinking oneself or for entertaining Persian visitors with their favourite refreshment. A couple of tins of cocoa may be added. Wine can be procured in the large cities, and arrack

in the towns; but Persian arrack is not a pleasant form of alcohol, and it will save trouble if the traveller provides himself with four bottles of brandy.

Some medicines are necessary; to wit, several dozen of quinine pills, a couple of boxes of Cockle's pills, a couple of bottles of chlorodyne, and two or three dozen pills compounded of opium and gallic acid. The chlorodyne will be very useful in checking any derangement arising from unwonted diet or over-fatigue and exposure, while the pills will arrest any effects which the chlorodyne has not been able to prevent. If the traveller finds himself subject to a prolonged attack, he should halt for a day or two, and restrict his diet to milk. By way of cooling medicine, I found Eno's Fruit Salt very useful and agreeable. The traveller ought to take with him a couple of broad flannel belts to be worn next the skin at times and places where considerable variations of temperature are to be expected.

The whole of this outfit, together with the traveller's slender stock of ammunition, can be contained in two mule-trunks of leather or wood. I had two such trunks which I bought in Karachi; they had been to Candahar and

back, and after six months' rough usage in Persia, they seemed not greatly the worse. They were rather smaller than was necessary; I would recommend some such dimensions as  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet in length, twenty inches in breadth, and twenty inches in height at the back, the lid sloping from one-fourth the breadth of the box at top (where the hinges are) to a height of fifteen inches in the front. One of the trunks should be made with a compartment to stow the bottles in. The lids should be covered with leather, to keep rain out. A mule will carry two hundred weight on a long march, and the two laden boxes ought not to weigh more than a hundred weight and a half; the lighter the better, for mountain roads are steep and bad.

A jointed wooden bed can easily be procured, which will weigh only eleven or twelve pounds. I have enjoyed many a most delicious sleep in a bed of this description. A light mattress that can be rolled up, and two pairs of blankets, will suffice for bedding. I always carried a large pillow with me. A flannel sleeping-suit is necessary. All these things, together with an old great-coat and waterproof and a common English carpet about ten feet square, can be rolled up and packed

comfortably in a pair of mafrashes, which can be bought in Bushire. A mafrash is a kind of sack-carpet-bag, opening down the side, and is admirably adapted for stowing away bedding, and for taking in any miscellaneous articles which happen to be lying about at the last moment.

Supposing the traveller landed from one of the steamers of the British India Steam Navigation Company with kit complete, in Bushire, his first care will be to hire mules. For the journey between Bushire and Shiraz (if he takes that route) he will probably have to accept whatever rate prevails in the market. The rate was extraordinarily high when I made this journey. But in hiring a caravan for several months' march, it ought to be possible, with a little tact and patience, to make a bargain at two to three qirans daily per mule. My first caravan consisted of five mules at three qirans each per day; my second, of six mules at fifteen qirans a day altogether. As to the number of mules, I entirely agree with Colonel Macgregor, when he says that he never regretted having kept up a caravan of six mules during the whole of his travels in Persia. The animals may be divided as follows:—One



mule for the two trunks, and another for the bedding; one with the clothing of the traveller's horses, which will also carry the groom; a fourth to carry the cook and cooking apparatus; the fifth can take the guns and any provisions which it may be necessary to carry on the road; and a spare mule is always useful. I would advise the traveller to purchase two horses in Shiraz. A good serviceable horse can be got for twenty to thirty tomans. Besides cook and groom, it is well to have a respectable upper servant or travelling companion. Such a man is very useful in finding quarters and procuring introductions to Persian gentlemen. Of course care must be taken that he does not cheat his master.

Cooking apparatus can be bought in Bushire or Shiraz. As for food, excellent mutton can be procured in all the large towns, and fowls in most villages. Bread can be had everywhere. In southern Persia the traveller will find dates very useful on a long march. Cheese, buttermilk, and sour curds can be obtained everywhere, but ought to be taken sparingly, as they are apt to disagree with the European stomach. Delicious milk is to be had in the morning and evening; throughout the day it is

unprocurable, being churned into buttermilk and curds immediately after the hour of milking.

The sportsman will find a good deal of shooting on the Persian mountains, if he lays himself out for it. This involves a halt, and a day spent in the mountains with a guide. The game are hares, partridges, wild goats, and wild sheep.

The arms I carried were a gun, a rifle, and a revolver. In some parts of Fars, the show of arms may be useful; but so far as I have seen, Persian roads are perfectly safe for the European traveller.

I always called upon the governors of the large towns, and procured letters for the road from them when necessary. Provided with such letters, the traveller will find no difficulty in inducing the headmen of villages to give him lodgings. The Persians are a sociable people, and it is easy to fraternize with them. Let the traveller only lay aside unreasonable jealousy for his own dignity, and he will find agreeable companions in most of his halting-places. Indian deference, of course, is not to be expected.

The traveller in Persia will see an old Mohammedan kingdom, less changed than any

other by intercourse with the West. He will enjoy an admirable climate, if he can so time his tour as to visit the lowlands and the coast country in the winter, and to spend the summer in the mountains. He will see landscapes which are perhaps unique of their kind, lofty and rugged ranges, huge wastes, and rare but lovely patches of verdure, all set off to the utmost advantage under a sky of marvellous blue, and in an air whose purity displays the form and colour of every feature with a vivid and startling distinctness. He will rejoice in the physical vigour inspired by an air charged with ozone, and in the sense of freedom, adventure, and self-reliance. He will learn the luxury of eating when he is hungry, and sleeping when he is wearied. He will have the pleasure, if so inclined, of exploring new routes and adding to our store of geographical knowledge. A few such routes may be mentioned as particularly worthy of exploration. (1) To land at Bandar Abbas and trace the Kir river from its mouth to Kir. (2) To investigate the Rawar district. (3) To explore the Daurivan mountains, and the route to Yazd under their southwestern face. (4) To travel from Shiraz to Isfahan *viâ* Baonat and the villages behind

Shirkuh and the Marwah range. (5) To spend a summer with the iliabs of the region of Chakar Gumbaz and Kuh Khabr. (6) To investigate the geography of Luristan, between Zarda Kuh and Karmanshahan.

Finally, as to expense. One can travel in Persia for little more than the cost of living in India. Four hundred rupees a month will be a sufficient allowance.



THE END.

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